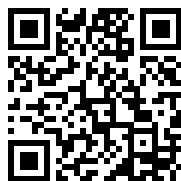

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ARMINE

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ROBERTA SARAH TWYFORD

ARMINE.

BY

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Author of "Hearts and Hands," "Mabel Lee," "Morton House," "Valerie Aylmer,"

" "Daughter of Bohemia," etc., etc., etc.



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ARMINE.

CHAPTER I.

IN one of the tall houses that on the left bank of the Seine overlook the quays, the river, the palaces and gardens of beautiful Paris was a pleasant suite of apartments, into a room of which the sun was pouring a flood of brightness on one of those April days when, after the mists and fogs of winter, Paris seems rejoicing in brilliant life, when the trees of the Tuileries are a mass of tender green and the chestnuts are in bloom along the Champs Elysées, when the very air suggests thoughts of pleasure and the roll of carriages is borne continuously to the ear. On such a day one is inclined to think that all the world, in a literal sense, is abroad, thronging the boulevards, the gardens, the Bois de Boulogne; yet it is, after all, only a small proportion of the inhabitants of the great city whom one beholds. Apart from the vast army who carry on the business of life and who are bound fast to daily toil, whatever form that toil may take, there is the multitude of those who are the victims of physical suffering, to whom sunshine brings only the realization of pain, and for whom there is little repose, even

“When God himself draws the curtain.”

It was on one of these that the sunshine fell as it poured that day into the apartment on the Quai Voltaire. Falling through a window which commanded a wide outlook of sky, it streamed across a couch on which lay a man in the prime of life, yet for whom life in any active sense was as much over as if he had attained the extreme bound of human existence—nay, in any physically active sense as much as if he lay already in a narrower bed than that on which he was now prisoned. Paralyzed from the waist downward, unable to do more than lift himself to a

sitting posture, absolutely unable without assistance to move from his couch, racked by constant suffering—suffering so intense that physicians well used to all forms of human agony spoke of it as almost unexampled—there was nevertheless another sense in which life was not over for him. No one could look at his face—singularly attractive, though pale as ivory from long confinement and worn by pain—without seeing the undimmed light of a spiritual and mental life which was a source of blessing not only to himself but to all who were privileged to approach him.

And there were a few people out of the great world of Paris who valued this privilege—a few who felt when they entered his chamber that they trod upon sacred ground. For here the virtue of patience, which is of all virtues hardest to impatient human hearts, was practised in heroic degree; here was detachment from the world so complete that there was no longer even regret for its loss, yet an intellectual interest in all great questions as keen as that of any one who mingled in its hottest strife; here was that fine sympathy which suffering teaches to the highest natures, an interest which never flagged, and a penetration so seldom at fault that a word or two from his lips often solved a problem or settled a difficulty for those who had hardly been conscious of being read.

And who was the man with whom God had dealt thus hardly, yet thus well? Raoul d'Antignac had been born in Louisiana, but he was descended from an ancient French family, his grandfather, the Comte d'Antignac, having taken refuge there during the Reign of Terror. The latter died without returning to France, and his son quietly settled, lived, and also died in the New World. So, no doubt, would his grandson have done but for the Civil War, into which he rushed with all the ardent soul of a boy of twenty, and out of which he came sick at heart and well-nigh ruined in fortune. It did not take him long to decide what to do. He was not bound, as many men were, by responsibilities which could not be thrown off, to stay and face the dark problems of those days. His only near relative was a sister younger than himself, who lived with her guardian. Selling, therefore, his now almost valueless estate, he left America, went to Rome, and entered the ranks of the Papal Zouaves. It was a service and a life which suited him in the highest degree. Though he had not up to that time been exemplary in the practice of his faith, his was essentially a loyal nature, and he would even in his most careless moments have died for it, as

he would have died for his flag. But it was a symbol rather than a reality to him—something handed down from the past, which a D'Antignac could not deny—and not until his residence in Rome could living faith be said to have awakened in him. It was then united to that passionate personal devotion to the Holy Father which Pius IX. inspired in those around him, and which in the case of young D'Antignac was founded upon the kindest personal notice. They were golden years—the flower of a life early shadowed by stern hardships and dangers, and soon to be more deeply shadowed still—which the young man passed in the Eternal City between '65 and '70. In the brilliant society of those days no one was more flatteringly received than the handsome Creole, who was the boldest horseman, the best dancer, in Rome, and about whom lingered like a perfume something of that grace of the *ancien régime* which his grandfather had borne from Versailles to Louisiana.

And it was here that he came for the first time in contact with one of his own kinsmen and formed a friendship of the most close and enduring nature. Among the Frenchmen of the corps was the young Vicomte de Marigny, who, struck by D'Antignac's name, soon discovered that they were cousins, the Comte d'Antignac who went to America having been his great-uncle. This recognition was not only pleasant to one who had felt himself a stranger in a strange land, but the friendship of which it was the first link was destined to exercise a deep and lasting influence over the life of D'Antignac. For De Marigny was a Frenchman of the school of Montalembert—a man whose intellect bowed down before the majesty of revealed truth, and who to the homage of his mind added the love of his heart and the service of his life. This lofty type of character, with its ardent devotion, was a new revelation to the young Louisianian; and it was De Marigny who first led him, as it were, into the temple of faith. He was afterward to advance further than his teacher, to climb higher on the steep path of perfection; but he never forgot whose hand had guided him over the first steps, and the strong attachment which then sprang into life was never to know diminution or shadow of change.

But the events of 1870 ended this life in Rome. Like many of his comrades, D'Antignac would willingly have died on the walls of the Holy City, but the command of the Sovereign Pontiff was positive—no one of his little band of soldiers should be sacrificed vainly; there should be enough resistance, in the face of overwhelming odds, to show Europe that Rome was

violently taken—but no more. So, when the breach in the walls was made and the Piedmontese troops entered the city, where many a barbarous invader had preceded them, the papal soldiers, like St. Peter in the garden of Gethsemani, reluctantly sheathed their swords and went to fall with tears at the feet of him whom they could no longer serve—the saintly pontiff, who gave them his parting blessing in words that each man will carry engraved on his heart for ever.

Brothers and companions-in-arms as they had been for many days, the hour for separation had now come, and, leaving the desecrated city they could no longer defend, they went their different ways. There was but one way, however, for the Frenchmen—the road to France, where, sinking all political differences, they offered their swords to whatever government could be said to exist, for the defence of their native soil. It was natural that D'Antignac should go with them. In that hour he felt that he, too, was a Frenchman. "Find me a place in the ranks—that is all I ask," he said to De Marigny, who replied that if nothing else proved possible he knew one general who would take him as a volunteer on his staff. But in that hour France was not so rich in swords that she could afford to refuse any that were offered, especially the sword of one who had already seen nine years of military service. D'Antignac was appointed to the command of some of the hastily-levied troops, and had time to distinguish himself by daring gallantry before the end—which was well-nigh the end of all things—came for him. It was in one of the battles on the Loire. He had been severely wounded, but still kept his saddle to rally his men for a desperate charge, when a cannon-ball killed his horse, which in falling backward crushed the rider under him. Those near rushed to his assistance, but he bade them go on. "This is no time to help the wounded," he gasped. "Come back afterward, if you can. Forward now!" So they left him in mortal agony, while they went forward to win one of those brilliant victories which even in that campaign of disaster proved of what French soldiers are still capable; and when at last those who were left came back and drew him from under the fallen horse, they thought him dead.

But he was only, as he often afterward said of himself, *half* dead. Besides his wounds the fall of the horse had injured his spine so that paralysis of the lower half of the body followed, and was accompanied by suffering which the surgeons declared could never be more than alleviated and must increase as time

went on until at last the vital power of the man's strong frame would yield under it. "Pray for me that it may be soon," he said to De Marigny when he first heard his sentence; and it was almost the only expression of agony which even at the first escaped him. But it was not to be soon. The brave heart was to be tried, the great soul perfected, by years of suffering, by that anguish of helplessness which seems doubly terrible when it falls upon a man in the flower of his life. After the end of the war and of the awful days which followed he was, by his own request, taken to Paris, "where science can do her best or worst for me," he said; and there the sister who had meanwhile grown to womanhood in Louisiana came to devote her life to him.

This, then, was the man into whose chamber the sunshine streamed with its message of hope and gladness on that April day. It was a cheerful scene which it lit up—a room where cultivated taste had with moderate means produced the most charming result. The walls were covered with engravings and photographs of the greatest pictures of the world, and on brackets bronze copies in miniature of the noblest statues. There were rows of shelves filled with volumes, and tables where books and papers lay, around slender vases filled with flowers. Everywhere the tokens of a woman's hand were evident. The bed in a curtained alcove could hardly be observed, and it was not on this but on a couch that D'Antignac lay, near the sunny window which overlooked the river, with its constant animation, the rich architecture of the palaces, and the verdure of the gardens beyond. Here he was propped to a partly sitting posture by large pillows, while across his limbs a soft rug of warm, rich colors was spread. On the wall above, his sword and the medal of a Pontifical Zouave hung at the feet of a large ivory crucifix.

So, looking, with eyes full of a calm that contrasted strikingly with the suffering-stamped face, out on the brilliant city and far blue sky, he had lain for some time—motionless, since a book which he had been trying to read had dropped from his hand. Presently he extended this hand to touch a bell that stood on a small table by his side, but at the moment there was a low knock at the door of the room, and in response to his "*Entrez!*" the door opened, showing the slender figure of a girl, who carried in her hand a large bunch of lilac.

CHAPTER II.

"*Bonjour*, M. d'Antignac," she said, advancing into the room. "I hope that I find you better to-day."

"Ah! it is you, Mlle. Armine," said D'Antignac, smiling. "Yes, I am better than when you were here last, for then I could hardly speak to you. To-day I am at my best, and I am glad to see you. You come like a nymph of the spring," he added, as she held out the blossoms for him to inhale their fragrance.

"I felt a longing for the country to-day," she said; "so I went out to Auteuil, and I have brought this back for you. I thought of you very much, the country is so lovely just now."

She uttered these words with an accent that implied much more than was said of the compassion with which her eyes were filled as she regarded him. But he only smiled again.

"It is better than seeing the beauty of nature for one's self, to be in the minds and hearts of one's friends when *they* see it," he said. "And this lilac is a fragrant proof of your remembrance."

"I pulled it with my own hands. I thought you would perhaps value it more than if it had been bought in the flower-market."

"They are such kind, helpful hands that I should be ungrateful if I failed to value whatever they bring me," he said, looking at them as they were busy arranging the lilac in a vase.

She cast a glance at him which was almost reproachful.

"Do not speak to me in that way, M. d'Antignac," she said, "if you do not wish to make me ashamed. For what have my hands ever done—what can they ever do—for *you* that will bear the most remote comparison to what you have done for *me*?"

"We are none of us accountable for the opportunities which are given or withheld from us," he answered, "only for how we use them, and for the will which is more than deeds; else why should the giving of a cup of cold water under some circumstances be more than the giving of a fortune under others? In anything that I have done for you, *ma sœur*, I have simply been God's instrument."

"Is a saint—and I suppose you would refuse to let me call you that—more than God's instrument?" she asked.

"No more," he replied. "But we must not dream of saintliness, poor struggling people like you and I. Sit down and tell me of your day at Auteuil. With whom did you go?"

"Only with Madelon; and we went and returned by the Seine. I love the river, and love it not less because one can disembark at your door."

"You are a subtle flatterer," he said. "But indeed I love the river, too, and am glad to be where I can look down upon it. It is like—nay, it *is*—a poem of nature in the midst of the feverish, turbulent city. For the very water that flows under our bridges and along our quays has flowed under forest shade and along green fields, has reflected the soft hills and held the heaven in its heart."

Involuntarily he looked as he spoke through the wide, open window, up at that heaven, so blue, so fair, so distant, and the girl watching him thought that he, too, held it in his heart. So thinking, she did not reply, and silence fell for a minute.

It was a minute long enough to photograph Armine Duchesne, as she sat there with her hands clasped in her lap and her eyes fastened on the worn face of the man before her. They were beautiful eyes—large, soft, golden-brown, and thickly fringed. The face in which they were set was delicate in outline, and in complexion of that clear brunette paleness which is seldom seen out of a southern country—a face striking from its refinement and sensitiveness, with a depth of feeling belonging to the type, and a depth of thoughtfulness not so common. It is usually possible in France to tell at a glance the social position of any woman; but the most practised observer might have found it difficult to decide to what rank this woman belonged. The simplicity of her toilette put the idea of a great lady as much out of the question as the exquisite refinement of her personal appearance made it impossible to think her *bourgeoise*. A Frenchman might have solved the riddle by saying, with a glance at her face, "*Artiste*," but it would have been an incorrect solution.

Presently D'Antignac, looking toward her and meeting the gaze of the full, soft eyes, said: "Hélène was speaking of you only this morning and regretting that we have seen you so seldom of late."

"It is I who have most cause to regret it," she answered quietly; "but my father has been at home, and when that is the case I have less time to go out. He has always much for me to do, writing, translating—" She paused, and a shade of trouble was in her glance. "I often wonder," she went on, after a moment, "and it has long been in my mind to ask you, how far I am right in lending even my feeble aid to such work. Sometimes the pen drops from my fingers; I feel that I can-

not go on, yet it is work which my father will do himself if I refuse to help him. And can I refuse to help him, who has always been good and kind to me?"

Her voice took a tone of entreaty in uttering the last words, and the slender hands lying in her lap clasped themselves more closely together. D'Antignac hesitated for an instant before answering, and when he spoke it was evidently with reluctance.

"You do not need for me to tell you," he said, "of the responsibility attending the use of the pen. No one can tell how far the influence of a book may extend or when that influence may end."

"But does that responsibility include one who, like myself, has been only a machine to do another's bidding? I often say to myself that I am simply the pen my father uses."

"The comparison is not good. A pen has no sense of responsibility; you have. But," he added, after a pause, "do not understand me as saying that you are wrong. I do not say so: I do not know. Fate—if one may use such a term—has been hard upon you, my poor Armine. You are bound not only by the ties of nature but by your own heart-strings to one whose work in life your mind and soul condemn. And where filial duty ends at the bidding of a higher duty I am not wise enough to say."

"If *you* are not wise enough to say, where shall I go to learn?" asked the girl, with a faint smile.

"Surely," he said, "you do not need for me to tell you where you will find a much better director than I am—one not only with more authority, but with much higher wisdom."

"With more authority, yes; with higher wisdom—ah! I doubt that," she said. "If you are in doubt I am content to remain so, and to aid my father like a machine, a clerk—"

"You are more than that to him," said the other; "but I understand how it is—you do not wish to be told by a voice of authority what will compel you to refuse that aid."

"It would go hard with me," said the girl, "for you do not know my father as I know him. To you he is the most dangerous of those who wish to tear down all the fabric of religious and social order; but to me he is not only my father, but also one whom I know to be a passionate and sincere enthusiast. He does not think of himself, M. d'Antignac: he is not one of those who desire to bring about a revolution in order that *he* may rise on the ruins of what is cast down. He is blind—he is mad, if you will—but he thinks, oh! indeed he thinks, of others rather than of himself."

"I believe it," said D'Antignac gently, deeply moved by the feeling in her last words; "but you must forgive me if I say that is altogether apart from the question. Your father's motives concern only himself; his deeds concern and influence many. But I do not wish to say anything which will make your position harder, so let us talk no more of this."

There was a moment's pause, then the girl said wistfully: "Do you know I often wonder what the lives and thoughts of other women are like? I suppose from the books which I read, and from the glimpses of them which I have had, that they are not like mine. Their lives are full of simple cares and their minds of gentle thoughts; is it not so? But I have known nothing save an atmosphere of revolution and revolt. Terrible sounds have rung in my ears as long as I can remember; I have heard my father and his companions talk passionately of the sufferings of humanity, and preach remedies more terrible than those sufferings. Then I used to go with my mother to church and look with a strange sense of amazement and doubt at the crucifix—that symbol of all which I had heard so often denounced. Even in my childish mind these great problems found a battlefield and drove away simpler thoughts. My mother died, and there was no one to throw a ray of light on perplexities which I could not solve for myself, until God sent you, M. d'Antignac."

"I am grateful," he said, "that even in my helplessness God gave me such work to do."

"Your helplessness!" she repeated. "Who is there that with health and strength does half so much for others?"

He lifted one thin hand as if to silence her; but before he could speak the door again opened and a lady entered, followed by a man of distinguished appearance.

"I knew that I might bring M. de Marigny in at once, my brother," the lady said.

"Surely yes," answered D'Antignac with a quick glow of pleasure on his face. He held out his hand, adding eagerly, "So, Gaston, you are back in Paris!"

"I arrived last night," the other answered, "and, after the transaction of some necessary affairs, you see where my first visit is paid."

His voice was very melodious, and the expression of his face, as he looked down at the pale countenance which looked up at him, was so full of affection that the girl who was regarding the scene felt her heart warm toward him, stranger though he was. She also looked at him with some curiosity, for she had heard

of the Vicomte de Marigny, and what she had heard lent interest to this first sight of him.

But her attention was claimed by Mlle. d'Antignac, who turned toward her, saying, as her brother had said:

"Why, Armine, it has been long since we have seen you."

"It has seemed longer to me than to you, I am sure," Armine answered. "But I could not help it; I have been detained at home. And now"—she rose—"it is time that I should go."

"Not until you come and have a little talk with me," said Mlle. d'Antignac decidedly. "I cannot let my brother monopolize you."

"It is I, rather, who wished to monopolize *him*," said the girl, smiling.

It was such an exquisite smile—so sudden and sweet—that it struck the vicomte, whose glance had fallen on her, and who at the same moment marked the delicate refinement of her face and the pathos of her large, soft eyes. He drew back a little as she advanced to the side of the couch to take the hand that D'Antignac extended.

"Thank you for the flowers and the visit," he said, "and do not let it be long until you come again."

"You ought to know that I always come when I can," she answered. Then, with a bend of the head in acknowledgment of the vicomte's bow as she passed him, she went with Hélène from the room.

"My brother is happy now," said the latter, as she opened a door which led into her own *salon*—a small but exceedingly pretty apartment—"for he has Gaston de Marigny with him. They are like brothers, or more than brothers; for I fancy few brothers have such comprehension, affection, and sympathy for each other as they have."

"It is the first time that I have ever seen M. de Marigny," said Armine.

"The first time!" repeated the other, with some surprise. "How does that happen, when he is so often here?"

Armine shook her head. "I do not know," she answered. "But when we were living in the same house and were together most I think I heard you say that he was not in Paris."

"True," said Mlle. d'Antignac. "He was at that time in Brittany with his father, who was dying of a lingering disease—although even then we saw him occasionally. Now he has just returned from Rome, and how much he and Raoul will have to talk of!"

"How much, indeed!" said Armine. "But I fear that it will make M. d'Antignac sad, he seems to have such a peculiar affection for Rome."

"Nothing makes him sad," answered his sister. "His serenity is never ruffled, his cheerfulness never fails. He seems to have such conformity to God's will that he accepts whatever happens with perfect acquiescence. When M. de Marigny came to bid him good-by he said a little wistfully, 'Ah! I should like to see Rome again.' But he added almost immediately, with a smile, 'Yet it matters little, since I hope some day to enter a more eternal city.'"

"If he does not enter it the rest of us may despair," said Armine quickly. "I suppose one should not wish him to remain where he suffers so much; but what will the world be like when he leaves it!"

"Desolate enough for some of us," said H  l  ne, while her eyes filled with tears. They were fine eyes—the only beautiful feature of her face. It was a typical French face, even to the slight dark down on the upper lip—a face seen as often among the Creoles of Louisiana as among the people from whom they sprang—and which in this instance only the eyes and the flash of regular white teeth redeemed from plainness. But it was a strong though not a handsome face, full of the expression of that sense which we call common, notwithstanding that in reality it is the most uncommon of all, and which is chiefly shown in administering the practical affairs of life. Certainly H  l  ne d'Antignac did wonders in administering for her brother and herself the moderate fortune which was all that remained to them of a great estate.

"I do not suffer myself to think of the future," she said after a moment. "To-day is all that we possess; and when to-morrow becomes to-day it will bring the strength it needs for whatever we may have to do or endure. That is what Raoul always says. But now tell me something of yourself, my dear little Armine."

Armine smiled—perhaps at the term of endearment, since she was considerably taller than the speaker—as she answered: "Oh! there is nothing to tell of my life. You know how monotonous it is outwardly, and how full of disquiet inwardly," she added after a slight pause. "My father never leaves me that I do not feel as if it may be a final farewell. I know just enough to know how closely he is connected with desperate plans, and to tremble for what the result may be to him. For he," she said, looking at H  l  ne with the same half-proud, half-pathetic air of apology

she had worn when speaking of him to D'Antignac, "is not of those who simply direct, who put others forward in places of danger. If there is a service of special peril he takes it upon himself. I know that."

"My poor child, it is a sad knowledge for you," said the other.

"Yes, it is sad," said Armine, "but we have all to bear our burden in one form or another; is it not so? I never feel so sure of that as when I look at M. d'Antignac. And doubts which confuse and trouble me are never so laid to rest as by his voice."

"I do not wonder at that," said his sister. "He has a peculiar power of touching the heart and convincing the mind. But do you know what he said the other day? Some one was speaking of the great sermons which the Père Monsabre is preaching in Notre Dame, and he said, 'I wish that Armine would go to hear them.'"

"Did he?" said Armine quickly. "Then I *will* go. I could not hear a wish of his without attempting at least to fulfil it; and surely it is easy to go to Notre Dame when the Père Monsabre preaches."

"It is easy to go," said Hélène, "but not so easy to hear the preacher. It is said that at least five thousand men attend these conferences; and, since he addresses men chiefly on the great questions of the age, the nave is reserved for them, and women must take their chances in the aisles."

"I shall take mine," said the girl, smiling. "Thank you for telling me. And now I must bid you adieu. My good Madelon is waiting for me below, and I do not wish to keep her longer."

CHAPTER III.

"THAT is an interesting face," said the Vicomte de Marigny, as the door closed behind the two feminine figures.

"Armine's?" said D'Antignac. "Yes, an interesting face, and a more interesting character. You have heard me speak of her—the daughter of a red-hot Communist, a man who devotes his life to forwarding revolutionary aims all over Europe."

"And yet she has that Madonna countenance!" said the other, smiling. "Nature indulges in odd freaks sometimes."

"Oh! Duchesne is himself a man of refinement, a man of

talent, and—there is some suspicion—a man of birth,” answered D’Antignac.

“Duchesne!” repeated the vicomte, with an expression of surprise. “Are you talking of *him*? But how is it that you chance to know such people?”

“I do not know him at all; I have never seen him,” replied D’Antignac. “But in the house in which we lived before coming here he had an apartment. Hélène used to meet Armine on the stairs and took a fancy to her face. This led to acquaintance and finally to intimacy. You may conceive my surprise when I found this girl—this child almost—pondering upon the deepest problems of life. Her mother had been a Catholic, and some faint memory of her teaching remained in Armine’s mind, together with the wild doctrines she had imbibed from her father. When one finds such mental confusion it is usually difficult to clear the ground sufficiently for the reception of first principles; but I have never met with an intelligence which apprehended the logic of truth with greater quickness than that of Armine. It had been so long in darkness that it seemed almost to leap toward the light.”

“And how did the father take her conversion?” asked De Marigny with interest.

“I do not fancy that he knows anything about it,” said D’Antignac. “A man who is busily engaged in trying to overturn all the governments of Europe is not likely to have time to inquire closely into the beliefs of his daughter. The time may come, however, when she will be forced to astonish him by declaring them, for he makes her of use in preparing matter for the revolutionary propaganda, and she begins to question how far it is right to lend her aid to such work. She has just asked my opinion; I confess that I shrank from giving a positive one.”

“Has she no director?”

D’Antignac shook his head. “No. Faith is only an intellectual conviction with her as yet. She shrinks from the practice, fearing that it will bring her into some attitude of antagonism to her father. I see that, and I do not press her. God, I think, has his own designs with such a soul as hers. But enough of this! Tell me, Gaston, of yourself, of Rome.”

“I will tell you first what will interest you most,” said De Marigny. “I was received in private audience by the Holy Father and had the happiness of hearing that he approves all my plans and hopes. I wish that you could have heard him speak of France. You would have been struck by two things—by the

heart of the father and the mind of the statesman. He appreciates clearly all our perils and our needs; he sees that chief among those needs is the union of all conservative elements in concerted action against the destructive forces that have acquired power through our divisions. When I told him that the end to which I intended to direct all my effort was to form a common basis on which Legitimists, Orleanists, and Bonapartists could meet, he said, 'It is a noble aim.'

"Yes, it is a noble aim," said D'Antignac. "But have you forgotten that such a conservative alliance was formed once before, and betrayed by the Bonapartists?"

"No, I have not forgotten," replied the other, "but I trust to the wisdom which time has taught them. All thinking men must recognize the deadly nature of the peril which menaces us now, must see the darkness of the gulf on which France stands. Those who would blot out every glory of our past will soon leave us no hope in any future, if men cannot be roused from their partisanship for this or that dynasty to act together as Frenchmen and Catholics and thus save their country and their faith."

"France is so cursed with party madness and party blindness that I have little hope of their doing so," said D'Antignac; "but ends apparently as hopeless have been gained by courage and ability like yours, my Gaston. You must expect, however, to be accused of disloyalty to your own party."

"By some of its members—those, for example, who have not hesitated to attack even the Papal Nuncio—it is likely. But what then? It does not matter in the least to what misunderstanding or accusation I am subjected, if the end is gained. And if it is not gained—well, then I shall at least feel that I have not been one of those who stood by and saw France fall into the gulf of atheistic revolution without an effort to save her."

"And what battle-cry will you find to unite Legitimist, Orleanist, and Bonapartist?"

"We know," said De Marigny, "that there was once a battle-cry which stirred men's hearts and carried them victorious through many a conflict. It was 'God and the king.' But since we are not agreed what king we desire, I shall inscribe on the banner which I wish to raise the name of God alone. For the line of battle is now sharply drawn. It is not for any political preference that we have to fight, but for the very existence of faith, for the right to hold, practise, or teach religion at

all. Whatever else they disagree upon, our opponents are united in enmity to all that is signified by the name of God; and we therefore should sink our differences to unite in defence of it."

"But, unhappily, while they *are* fiercely united on that point, you have to overcome the indifference of multitudes of those who nominally hold the traditions of faith; you have to awaken generous ardor where there is now only selfish apathy."

"Then, in addressing such men one must touch their selfishness by showing them the dangers that lie before a godless people. Surely France, of all countries, should not need to be taught by another revolution of what atheism is capable! Those who have ears to hear may hear on all sides the sound of a coming storm which will not be content with throwing down the church only, but which will not leave one stone of social order standing upon another. If men are prepared to supinely yield their religion they must be prepared to yield also their property, and probably their lives."

"The last arguments may touch them," said D'Antignac, smiling. "I am inclined to think that the world is perishing for lack of logic. Certainly a little clear thinking would make many of the evils which afflict modern society impossible. Well, I can do nothing save wish you God-speed," he added, with a touch of wistfulness; "but you know that in this battle, as in the many we have fought together, my heart is with you though I lie useless here."

"Useless!" repeated De Marigny, much as Armine had spoken before him. "That you are not, or ever can be while life animates you; for you animate others to battles which might else be fought with but half-heartedness. I can answer for myself that when courage or purpose flags I come here for a spiritual or mental aid which has never failed me."

D'Antignac's look of thanks was at once eloquent and pathetic. "If," he said, "you do not exaggerate in order to please one who has few pleasures—"

"You must know," interposed the other quickly, "that I do not exaggerate in the least; that you are what I have said, not only to me but to many others."

"Then there is compensation for all that I miss or endure," D'Antignac went on; "for to sustain in any degree those who fight is as much as fighting one's self, without the dangers that attend victory. You don't need for me to tell you what those dangers are," he added, with another smile.

"I do not think that there is any need for me to guard against them," said De Marigny, answering the smile. "If I succeed it will merely be the success of one who lays a foundation for others to build upon."

"So much the better," returned D'Antignac. "To dig deep is better than to build high. Foundations are the most necessary as well as the most difficult part of any work, and if you have not glory with men your glory with God will be all the greater. And now let me hear your plans in detail."

These details the vicomte proceeded to give, and they were not only listened to with interest, but eagerly canvassed and discussed by this man who, prisoned on his couch of pain, showed, nevertheless, the most intimate acquaintance with the various phases of French politics and a striking knowledge of the world in his suggestions and advice.

But the conversation was presently interrupted by Hélène, who entered with a card in her hand.

"Do not fear," she said, with a smile at her brother, "that I am going to introduce a visitor. I told Pierre to deny you to any one as long as M. de Marigny was with you. But here is Mr. Egerton's card, with his compliments and hopes that you are better to-day."

"Egerton!" repeated D'Antignac. "If any one but Gaston were here I should say that I was sorry not to have seen him."

"Then I am sorry to have been the cause of your not having that pleasure," said the vicomte, smiling. "But who is this Mr. Egerton who is to be regretted?"

"To be regretted only when you are out of the question," said D'Antignac. "Who is he? A young, rich, idle American, clever and with intellectual tastes—a man of whom something brilliant is expected by his friends, but who will probably never verify their expectations, because he has no motive for exertion."

"Has he no ambition?"

"None. And, when one thinks of it, why should he have any? He already possesses in large degree that to which all, or nearly all, modern ambition tends—wealth. What has he to gain by subjecting himself to the drudgery of labor in any form?"

"It seems to me," said De Marigny, "that the best answer to that question lies in the fact that in all ages men—that is, some men—have felt that there is much besides wealth which is worth the price of labor: rewards so great, indeed, that wealth will bear no comparison to them."

"That is very true," said D'Antignac; "but it must not blind

us to the fact that in our age those rewards are constantly diminishing in value—are of worth only as they lead, indirectly perhaps but surely, to a golden end. We hear much of work which is to be unselfishly undertaken for the benefit of humanity, but as a matter of fact we see less of it than ever before in the history of the world. Egotism is more becoming a controlling force: men are more and more asking themselves, *Cui bono?* of any end which does not promise them power or pleasure."

"But the gratification of ambition does promise both," said De Marigny.

"Yes; but wealth can purchase both, without the long vigil of labor which is essential to attain any really high degree of excellence in any path of human effort. And when a man has that golden talisman he may say, 'Why should I "scorn delights and live laborious days" for an object which is certainly remote, and which may prove very unsatisfactory if I gain it, when here in my hand is the key to unlock all the doors of life, to enable me to taste all pleasures and most powers, to fill with varied enjoyment the few years granted me in which to live?'"

"If he thinks those few years are the sum of his existence there is no reason why he should not ask such a question," said De Marigny.

"And answer is impossible until you have proved to him that he has a spiritual as well as a physical and mental life, and that these few years are not all in which he has to live," said D'Antignac. "As philosophers, if not as Christians, we must perceive that every disease which is afflicting our age has its root in the same cause—the widespread extinction of religious faith. When man loses his dignity as an immortal being no end remains to him which is not worthless and illusory, save the end of gratifying his personal tastes and desires."

"And has this man of whom you speak no faith?"

"Not the least. What man of culture, outside the Catholic Church, has faith now?"

"Yet I am interested in him," said Hélène, who, with some needlework, had sat down near the open window. "He is intellectual and he is reasonable. I have not found in him any of that ignorant arrogance which characterizes so many of those who are known as 'positive thinkers.'"

"And who are at least positive in the expression of their crude opinions," said the vicomte, smiling.

"Well, that Mr. Egerton is not," she said. "He has the good sense not to be positive in anything—not even in denial—when

all is doubt with him. It is honest doubt, I think—which makes me sorry for him.”

“There is no need to be sorry for him on that account,” said M. de Marigny. “It is the best ground for congratulating him. If he is honest in doubt he may at length receive light to say *Credo*.”

D’Antignac made at this point a slight negative motion of the head. “He does not desire to say it,” he observed. “That is the worst of eras like this. Men do not wish to be left behind in what they regard as the great intellectual movement of the age. They regard it as the highest triumph of human intelligence to be in doubt about everything. Even the desire for faith is dead in them.”

“But it may be awakened,” said Hélène.

“Yes,” said the vicomte, “it may be awakened.”

He glanced as he spoke at the ivory crucifix, and then at the worn face beneath. “And here,” he added, “is a good place to waken it.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE same sunlight which was streaming over the wide boulevards and over pleasure-grounds thronged with people poured on this afternoon some of its rays into one of those narrow streets of old Paris which seem to have been purposely built to exclude all such rays—a street in the immediate neighborhood of the Sorbonne, where two young men met face to face an hour or so after Hélène d’Antignac had taken to her brother the card of a visitor whom he did not see.

“What, Egerton, is this you?” exclaimed one. “How comes it that a butterfly from the Champs Elysées has fluttered over here into the Quartier Latin?”

The speaker was evidently a denizen of the region. On him the stamp of the student was set, in dress and air as well as in the large portfolio which he carried under his arm. He was short and thick-set, with little grace of appearance, but his dark, heavily-bearded face was pleasant as well as sensible, and out of it looked bright, good-humored eyes. He might easily have passed for a Frenchman, not only from resemblance of type but from resemblance of manner, acquired naturally by long residence among Gallic people; but when he spoke English it was at once apparent that he spoke his native tongue, though—an English ear would have detected—with an American accent.

The man whom he addressed was a much more distinguished-looking person. Tall, slender, handsome, with an air of elegance pervading his careful toilet, he was certainly the kind of figure more likely to be encountered in the Champs Elysées than in the Quartier Latin. But that he did not deserve the epithet bestowed upon him was sufficiently evident from the intellectual character of his face and from the observant glance of his clear eyes. Any one who had followed the regard of those eyes for some time past would have seen that he did not move indifferently through this classic quarter of the colleges of Paris, this spot sacred to learning, where for so long Europe sent her scholars and students in multitudes to gratify that passion for knowledge which, except among the philosophers of Greece, never existed in the world to a greater degree than in the schools and among the schoolmen of the middle ages.

Like most of his generation, Alan Egerton knew little of those ages save that they were generally credited with having been "dark"; but he would not have been an educated, much less an intellectual, man, if he had not known the fame of the University of Paris, and if he had not felt a certain thrill in passing over ground which has been the chosen arena of the human intellect, and where the very stones were suggestive of a thousand kindling memories. Nor was he one of those with whom custom stales such memories. Many times before had he looked on the ancient, time-stained walls of the Sorbonne, many times before trod the narrow streets, but never without a keen realization of all that the first had enshrined and all that the last had witnessed. He was looking down one of these streets with a glance which noted all its picturesqueness when accosted by the salutation recorded above.

"Ah! Winter," he said, with a smile, "you are the man I am in search of. I have been to your apartment, but, not finding you, strolled in this direction, thinking it likely I should meet you."

"Yes, the lecture is just over," said Winter, shifting his portfolio a little. "And what may your lordship want?"

"I want," said the latter, "to say that I have changed my mind on the subject we were speaking of last, and that I believe I should like to hear your revolutionary tribune."

Winter gave him a quick glance. "You are in need of a new sensation, then?" he said.

"Partly," the other answered; "partly, also, I am in need of information. It struck me after our last conversation that I know very little about this tremendous movement called Socialism—

"Very little indeed," put in Winter.

"And that since it is well to inform one's self on all subjects, and since I am here in Paris with little to do, I might as well embrace the opportunity you offered me, especially as you promised that I should hear some real eloquence."

"You will undoubtedly hear it," said Winter emphatically. "But you will also hear some very plain speaking. Duchesne does not wear gloves when he deals with silken gentlemen like yourself, who, possessing all the goods and pleasures of the world, still find life only a weariness and a burden."

"It strikes me that we should rather be pitied than denounced for that," said Egerton pleasantly. "However, I shall not mind how roughly M. Duchesne handles us, if he affords me a little intellectual amusement."

"Intellectual amusement!" repeated the other. "Yes, that is all you care for. Questions which are convulsing the world, shaking nations to their centre, and making thrones tremble, only serve to amuse an intellectual sybarite like yourself."

"And why not?" demanded the other, with undiminished good-humor. "If their importance is so great it surely will not diminish it that they serve to amuse an insignificant intellectual sybarite. That is a good term, Winter, by the way. I am much obliged to you for suggesting it."

"Don't let the obligation overpower you," said Winter, "for I don't myself think it very flattering. But it describes you exactly. I am never with you that I am not struck by the manner in which you trifle with all beliefs and hold none."

"None has ever yet showed me good reason why I should hold it," replied Egerton. "I have not your faculty of enthusiasm. I cannot see a prophet in a revolutionary ranter, or a coming Utopia in the reign of the mob."

Winter uttered something like a growl, but beyond this did not speak, so they walked on in silence for a moment—Egerton having turned and joined him—until, leaving the narrow street with its high, dark houses, they turned into the boulevard which under the Second Empire was opened through the quaint, winding, mediæval ways, bringing daylight to many an obscure spot where crime and wretchedness dwelt in darkness, but also demolishing much of the picturesqueness and spoiling much of the charm of this old famous quarter. As they entered the broad thoroughfare which is known on the left bank of the Seine as the Boulevard St. Michel, and which forms a direct line with the Boulevard de Sebastopol on the right bank—the

Napoleonic and Haussmannic idea having been to lay out as many straight and tedious avenues, which cannon could readily sweep, as possible—Egerton said :

"You have not yet told me when and where I can hear this Duchesne."

"I have not told you," Winter answered, "because I don't know. I don't even know whether or not he is in Paris now. But if you are not in haste I may be able to find a man who is pretty certain to know."

"I am not in the least haste," Egerton replied.

"Then we will go to a café which he frequents and where there is a chance of meeting him—at least he is often to be found there at this hour."

They proceeded, therefore, along the Boulevard St. Michel until, after crossing the Boulevard St. Germain, which intersects it, Winter turned into one of the cafés that are numerous in the neighborhood. It was a dark-looking place, not rendered more cheerful in aspect by the clouds of tobacco-smoke rising from the groups of men who were sitting around various small tables, drinking moderately and talking excessively. Winter received a running fire of salutations as he passed among them ; but he did not pause until he reached a table in a corner near a window where only one man was sitting buried in a newspaper, by which stood a glass of absinthe. On this man's shoulder Winter laid his hand.

"*Bonjour*, Leroux," he said. "I am glad to find you."

"*Bonjour*, *cher* Winter," returned the other, glancing up. "How goes it with you to-day? And why are you glad to find me?"

"Because I want some information that you can probably afford," replied Winter. "But first let me introduce my friend Mr. Egerton, and, if you do not object, we will join you."

"With all my heart," said Leroux, adding, with a motion toward his glass as they sat down, "Will you join me in this also?"

"We prefer a bottle of wine—eh, Alan?" said Winter. "You had much better drink it instead of that poisonous stuff, Leroux."

Leroux shrugged his shoulders. "I am getting up inspiration for my night's work, as an engine gets up steam," he said. "It is a matter of necessity."

"M. Leroux is a writer, a *feuilletonist* whom Paris knows well," said Winter, addressing Egerton.

"Whom Paris does not yet know so well as it may, perhaps,

some day," said the *feuilletonist* calmly. "*Eh bien*, you have not yet told me what it is that I can do for you."

"Briefly, then, you can tell me whether Duchesne is in Paris, and, if so, when and where he is likely to speak. My friend wishes to hear him."

Leroux turned a pair of keen eyes on that gentleman.

"Monsieur has heard of Duchesne, then?" he said.

"Yes, I have heard of him," Egerton answered; "but what I have heard would not have made me desire to listen to one of his speeches, if Winter had not assured me that he is singularly eloquent; and real eloquence is something very uncommon."

"Monsieur is not, then, interested in the cause to which Duchesne lends the aid of his eloquence?"

"One cannot be interested in what one knows little about," replied Egerton indifferently. "I confess that I am not very favorably inclined toward it. But I am open to conviction," he added, with a smile.

"In that case it is well that you should hear Duchesne," said the other; "and, as it chances, he speaks to-night in the Faubourg Montmartre. I did not think of going, for I have heard him often; but he is always worth hearing—a man of wonderful power, *ma foi*!—and I shall find pleasure in accompanying you."

"You are very kind," said Egerton; "but is it necessary that you should give yourself that trouble? Can I not go alone, or with Winter?"

"The meeting is, of course, not secret—we have advanced beyond that," said the other; "but people of your class and general appearance are not common in Montmartre, and, in order that you should see and hear to the best advantage, it is well that you should be accompanied by some one better known than our friend Winter."

"I am only 'a looker-on here in Vienna' like yourself," said Winter. "You had better accept Leroux's offer. He is one of the army of which Duchesne is a leader."

"Then I accept it with thanks," said Egerton. "But, if I may be permitted to ask a question," he added, looking at Leroux with a very clear and comprehensive glance, "it is, What ultimate end does this army propose to itself?"

The other smiled a little grimly. "An end which is not likely to please men of your order," he said. "A thorough equalizing of all the inequalities of fortune, a share of the sun-

shine for every human being, and such an entire recasting of society as will make it impossible for one man to accumulate wealth from the labor of others."

"They are apparently very fine ends," said Egerton. "What I fail to perceive is any means by which they can be secured which would not be a worse tyranny than that which you wish to abolish."

"It will seem a tyranny, doubtless, to those who are the sufferers," said Leroux; "but they may console themselves with thinking what worse things the great mass of humanity have endured for many ages."

"That is, I am to be comforted for being robbed of my coat by the consideration that other men have lived and died without coats."

"If you choose so to put it. Have you not an English proverb which says that 'turn about is fair play'? Well, the Socialists do not propose so much as that; they do not say to you, 'Turn about with these men who have been so long crushed by want and agonizing in distress'; they only say, 'You shall share with them the fruit of their toil; the great bulk of humanity shall no longer groan and travail that a few may wear purple and fine linen. We demand and we will have an equal share of the goods of earth for every human creature.'"

"I, for one, am willing to admit that the demand is natural on the part of those who make it," said Egerton, "and I am willing to go a step farther and declare that I should be glad to see the thing accomplished, if it could be done without great and overwhelming injustice."

"Do you mean that equality would be injustice?"

"I mean that to forbid a man to profit by the powers of mind or body which exalt him above another man would be manifestly unjust."

"And would it not be, is it not, more unjust for him to use those powers of mind or body to take from the other man his right of prosperity and happiness, to make that other a mere machine to minister to his pleasure and to do his bidding?"

Egerton did not answer. He was, in fact, confronted with a subject on which, as he confessed to Winter, he had thought little, and that little in a vague manner. There was to him, as to most generous natures without a firm basis for thought, some attraction in the ideal which Socialism presented; but he could not blind himself to the practical difficulties in the way of the realization of that ideal, though not sufficiently equipped with

arguments to be able to present those difficulties in a forcible manner. It was Winter who now broke in, saying:

"The new gospel of the world—that on which Socialism rests—is the gospel of man's duty to his fellow-man. We have outgrown and flung by the childish fable of a Supreme Being with the power to bestow arbitrary rewards and punishments, and the belief that there is another life of more importance than this. We have faced the fact that this life is all of which we know or can know anything, and that it is our duty neither to spend it in misery ourselves nor to suffer any one else to do so."

"It seems to me," said Egerton, "that in such case the word duty becomes unmeaning."

"On the contrary, it becomes more imperative in its meaning than ever before," said Winter, "for the object of it is close beside us instead of being remote as formerly, and is altruistic instead of egoistic."

"Yes," said Leroux, "the immortal principles of the French Revolution—that first great assertion of the rights of man—are now the watchwords and battle-cries of humanity throughout the whole world. The fundamental truth which Jean Jacques Rousseau was the first to announce, that 'man is naturally good and that by institutions only is he made bad,' is the foundation of all the teaching of modern philosophy and the hope of the human race."

It occurred to Egerton that this hope of the human race was very much belied by its past experience; but he kept silence with the modesty befitting one who was receiving new and enlightened ideas. Whether it was owing to absinthe or inspiration, Leroux proceeded to expound these ideas at length and with considerable eloquence, so that when Egerton finally parted from his companions—having made an appointment for the evening—he felt as if it were hardly necessary to journey to Montmartre for more of the revolutionary gospel.

As has been already said, however, there was much in this gospel which attracted him. He was not one to wrap himself in material comfort and scoff at dreams for relieving the misery of mankind. He recognized the truth that in these dreams there is a great deal of noble and generous ardor, if not a large amount of practical wisdom. As he walked slowly toward the Seine, glancing here and there into those narrow streets, lined with tall, dark houses, which open from the modern boulevard, and where the poor of the great city still dwell in wretchedness and squalor and crime, some of the sentences which he had been hearing

came into his mind. "An equal place in the sunlight for all." Surely it was little of physical, mental, or moral sunlight which these children of poverty knew from birth to death! "The great bulk of humanity shall no longer groan and travail that a few may wear purple and fine linen." He looked down with a slight whimsical smile at the careful attire which with him represented this purple and fine linen. "Well, if it could be made absolutely certain that they would no longer need to groan and travail and live in darkness, I should be willing to resign it," he thought.

It was at this moment that he entered the Place St. Michel, and his glance fell on the fountain, above which stands the sculptured figure of the great Archangel trampling his infernal foe, the enemy of God. No Christian faith or knowledge had this man of culture; to him that majestic angel, the captain of the heavenly host, was no more than a poetical myth; but as an allegory and a type of the eternal battle between good and evil, between the powers of light and the powers of darkness, it struck him at that moment with peculiar force. Was it not seething and roaring all around him, this battle? and was not this wonderful Paris the chief battle-ground of the world, the place where strife was hottest, where the loftiest good confronted the deepest evil, and where light and darkness met in an irreconcilable struggle? And then there rose in his mind the question which in these days many a perplexed soul is asking itself: "Where is light?"

Leaving the Place, he walked toward the Quai St. Michel, and as he emerged on it he lifted his eyes to see a glorious and beautiful sight—the great front of Notre Dame, with its massive towers rising in the golden sunlight of late afternoon. Many volumes have been written upon the architectural splendor of this noble church, but no words can express the air of steadfast repose in which it seems steeped, as if the ages of faith had breathed their spirit over every stone. Like that truth which is unchanging amid the changing fashions of time, it stands in the heart of the turbulent city, on that island of the Seine where the Parisii built their huts and founded the town of Paris, where St. Louis administered justice, and where for eight hundred years successive storms of human passion have raged and innumerable millions of human beings lived and died around those mighty walls, within the shadow of those splendid towers. Well may they wear their aspect of immovable calm, and well may the host of sculptured figures look serenely down from over the

vast portals through which the Crusaders passed ; for this old sanctuary of faith has heard the battle-cries of the League and of the Fronde, and the wilder cries of Revolution, yet stands and looks over the great city of to-day as it looked over the "good town" of Philippe le Bel.

Some of these thoughts were in Egerton's mind as, having crossed the bridge, he paused in the square before the cathedral and looked up at its marvellous façade. And as he looked the eloquent words of a writer from whom the light of faith was, and yet is, veiled recurred to his memory. "There are," says Victor Hugo, "few more beautiful specimens of architecture than that façade, where the three porches with their pointed arches ; the plinth embroidered and fretted with twenty-eight royal niches ; the immense central mullioned window, flanked by its two lateral windows, like the priest by the deacon and the subdeacon ; the lofty and light gallery of open-work arcades supporting a heavy platform upon its slender pillars ; lastly, the two dark and massive towers with their slated penthouses—harmonious parts of a magnificent whole, placed one above another in five gigantic stages—present themselves to the eye in a crowd yet without confusion, with their innumerable details of statuary, sculpture, and carving, powerfully contributing to the tranquil grandeur of the whole—a vast symphony of stone, if we may be allowed the expression ; the colossal product of the combination of all the force of the age, in which the fancy of the workman, chastened by the genius of the artist, is seen starting forth in a hundred forms upon every stone ; in short, a sort of human creation, mighty and fertile like the divine creation, from which it seems to have borrowed the twofold character of variety and eternity."

It is this twofold character of variety and eternity—but chiefly of eternity—which the mighty stones of Notre Dame most fully breathe, and which at this moment appealed even more than its beauty to the man who gazed. "It had that repose—the old faith," he thought with something like a pang of regret. It did not occur to him to question what he had long accepted as a truth, that this old faith, having helped mankind in upward progress, was now to be thrown aside as a thing fit only for the infancy of the human intellect ; but he felt that none of the new creeds offered the sublime repose which was expressed here. "If I could put myself into the thirteenth century how undoubtedly I should enter and kneel before that altar !" he thought. "But a man must belong to his age."

He did not enter. He turned and walked away, while the great front of Notre Dame with its solemn grandeur mutely answered that man's dreams and theories indeed pass with the passing time, but that God's eternal truth is *for all ages*.

CHAPTER V.

IT was with an agreeable sense of penetrating below the strata where his life was spent, and exploring certain social and political phenomena, that Egerton went with Leroux to the Socialist meeting in the Faubourg Montmartre. But his light-heartedness vanished and something like a sense of weight seemed to fall upon him when he entered the place of meeting and found himself in the midst of a throng of men—mostly artisans, as he perceived at a glance—some of whom looked weary, many of whom looked pale, but all of whom looked resolute and grave with an almost menacing concentration of purpose. It was plainly for no mere airing of discontent, no mere purpose of listening to political harangues, that these men were assembled. Their aspect was significant of their mental attitude, and seemed to say that the time for words had well-nigh passed and the time for action well-nigh come. As Egerton looked around he felt that if he had ever stood on the crest of a volcano before the mighty flood of lava and flames burst forth, and had felt the trembling earth grow hot beneath his feet, he should have had much the same feeling as that which came over him in this assembly of desperate, earnest men, strong with that almost resistless force which union gives, and ready at a word to overthrow all which we know under the name of civilization.

"Duchesne is not here yet," said Leroux, with a quick glance around when they entered. A very energetic and fluent speaker was, however, on the platform, and Egerton during the next fifteen minutes heard much fiery declamation on the usual revolutionary themes—the rights of man, the oppression of governments, the tyranny of capital, and the infamous qualities of the *bourgeoisie*, whom the *prolétariat* now hates more intensely than he ever hated the aristocracy. But suddenly a side door opened and a dark, slender man with a face of higher culture than any other present made his appearance. "Duchesne!" said Leroux; and when the orator on the platform hastily finished his address, and this man stepped forward, there was a movement of sensibly quickening attention among the audience. "A man of

education and a man of talent," thought Egerton, regarding critically the keen face and dark, brilliant eyes. There was a moment's pause, while those eyes passed over the sea of faces and (he felt) noted his own countenance, before the speaker said, "*Mes frères*," in a singularly melodious voice.

By the tone of those words Egerton was at once interested. It was not the tone of a demagogue, but of one who felt the brotherhood which he expressed. Nature had done much for this man in giving him a voice which could put meaning into the simplest utterances, could sink into men's hearts to sway them with magnetic power. But it was soon apparent that he had also much besides this. As he went on Egerton was struck by that clearness and precision which distinguishes French thought even in its wildest aberrations; that is, given certain premises, the Frenchman uncompromisingly carries them out to their logical conclusion, and does not, like the Englishman, halt at a middle and illogical point of compromise. You might readily take issue with Duchesne upon his premises; but, granting those premises, there was no escape from the merciless logic of his conclusions. And the eloquence with which those conclusions were pressed was genuine, burning, almost resistless. If he decreed the destruction of all existing forms of social order, it was that the new order should arise from the ruins of the old—the new humanity, strong in solidarity, ruled by justice and love, with equal rights of property and happiness secured to all, and an ideal of perfection set before the race to which it might advance unimpeded by the social fetters now fastened on it. And toward this ideal France should march in the van, as she has ever marched on the long road of human progress. But in order to do this she must first shake off the *bourgeois* rule which had fastened itself upon her in the name of the liberty, equality, and fraternity which it profaned.

This (in substance), and much more than this, was the matter of a speech that seemed to Egerton the most thrilling to which he had ever listened. The enthusiasm of his nature was stirred by the glowing words which painted the future of mankind as contrasted with its past of wretchedness; he seemed in listening to discern what the other saw with the clear gaze of a prophet and described with a power that lent unspeakable fascination to the vision. All the misery of all the centuries seemed summoned before him, all the long travail of toil and pain in which myriads of millions had lived and died without hope of escape. He did not wonder that the men around him were like reeds

shaken by the wind. It was not denunciation alone in which this man dealt. He indicated, in terms that could not be mistaken, the means to the end; but he did not dwell on those means. It was the end on which he fixed his gaze, and which he described with passionate fervor.

"*Eh bien*, what do you think of him?" said Leroux when the address was concluded.

Egerton turned quickly. "Think of him!" he repeated. "I think that I have never heard anything like it before! He ought to be sent to preach a new crusade."

"What else is he doing?" asked the other. "He does not spare himself; he comes and goes, speaks, organizes, works incessantly. You might think from his speech to-night that he is visionary, but it is not so: he has great practical ability."

"His face indicates it," said Egerton. "That keen glance does not belong to a visionary." Then, after a moment, he added: "I should like to know him. Is it possible?"

"Entirely possible," replied Leroux. "I will introduce you at once."

So Egerton followed him up the now thinning room to where the orator of the evening stood, surrounded by a group of friends. He turned as Leroux approached, and the latter held out his hand.

"Let me congratulate you," he said. "You spoke well—more than well. And let me present M. Egerton, an Englishman—no, an American—who wishes to offer his congratulations also."

"They are most sincere congratulations, monsieur," said Egerton. "I have seldom heard such eloquence."

"You do me too much honor," said the other, with the air of a man of the world. "But my subject is one to inspire eloquence, if one has any power at all. You are interested in it, or you would not be here," he added, with a quick glance. "I hope that you are in sympathy with us?"

"I am in sympathy with you," Egerton answered. "But my sympathy does not mean going all lengths, and I confess that I am in doubt on many practical points."

"Yet we are very practical," said the other, with a smile. "Indeed, the fault that most people find with us is that we are too practical."

"Oh! I know that you aim at revolution," said Egerton; "and that is certainly practical enough. But the difficulties of which I speak will confront you afterwards."

"There are difficulties in everything," said Duchesne. "Can

you conceive the smallest undertaking without them? And what we aim at is not small, for it is nothing less than the regeneration of society."

"But you denounce all forms of government," said Egerton, "and I am unable to conceive a state of society without some power to maintain law and enforce order."

"In other words, because man has long been a slave you think that he cannot exist without a master," said the other. "But we hold that he is capable of governing himself, and that when the institutions are abolished which have been the cause of his crime as well as of his wretchedness—when he has his fair share of the goods of earth and the happiness of life—he will no longer need to be throttled by police and overawed by the bayonets of standing armies."

There was a murmur of assent from those around, and one man remarked that they would soon make an end of all such infamies as police and armies.

"How?" asked Egerton.

"By any means that will serve our end," he answered. "Desperate diseases require desperate remedies."

"It is impossible, M. Egerton," interposed Duchesne quickly, "that you can form any clear idea of our plans and aims from what you have heard to-night; but I shall be happy if you will afford me the opportunity to explain them to you more at length."

"I shall be very happy if you will take the trouble to do so," said Egerton, who, apart from his curiosity about Socialism, felt great interest in this socialistic tribune.

"Then if you have no farther engagement for this evening, and will do me the honor to accompany me home—I regret to say that I must leave Paris to-morrow morning."

Egerton eagerly accepted the invitation, and Leroux, to whom it was also extended, accepting likewise, Duchesne bade his other friends good-night, and the three went out together. The cab in which Egerton and Leroux arrived had been kept by the advice of the latter—cabs not being easily obtained in Montmartre—so Duchesne entered it with them, after giving his address to the coachman. This address rather surprised Egerton, for he had expected that the advocate of social equality, notwithstanding his refined appearance, would probably live in the Faubourg St. Antoine, but instead it appeared that he had his abode in the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs.

After leaving the Montmartre quarter it was through the

most brilliant part of Paris that their road lay, passing down the Rue Chaussée d'Antin to the Place de l'Opéra—with its floods of electric light, its sparkling cafés, and constant stream of carriages crossing the Boulevard des Italiens, with its flowing throng of well-dressed people—and following the Avenue de l'Opéra to the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, where, before a house which occupied an angle of the street, the cab stopped.

"I am sorry that you will be forced to mount *au quatrième*," said Duchesne, as they entered under the *porte-cochère*; "but rents are very high in this quarter, and as I find it necessary to live in a central part of Paris I compromise by ascending toward the sky. Fortunately, my daughter does not object."

"So he has a daughter!" thought Egerton. "And she does not 'object' to living *au quatrième* in the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs! Where does she expect to live, I wonder, when *la Révolution Sociale* has taken place? By the bye, I must ask Duchesne whether, under such circumstances, Montmartre will come down in force and take possession of the hotels of the rich, or whether everybody will be driven to Montmartre to live."

These somewhat flippant conjectures were cut short by their arrival on the landing-place of the fourth floor, where Duchesne with a pass-key admitted them into a vestibule on which three or four doors opened. Unclosing one of these, he led the way into a small but very cosy room, oblong in shape and evidently cut off from the *salon*, with which it communicated by a draped doorway. This apartment had an altogether masculine air and was plainly a place for study and work. On a large table a student's lamp burned in the midst of a litter of books, pamphlets, and newspapers. There were some comfortable leather-covered chairs and an array of pipes and cigars.

Leaving his guests here with a few words of apology, Duchesne passed into the next room, where his voice was heard mingled with feminine accents. He returned in a few minutes, saying with a smile: "I find that my daughter has prepared for me a little supper, in which she begs that you will join us."

Both men rose at once—Egerton with a strong sense of curiosity concerning the daughter of this well-bred Socialist—and they passed into the next room, which proved to be a very pretty *salon*. Before the open fire a slender, girlish figure stood. It turned as they approached, and Egerton thought that one of the most charming faces he had ever seen was revealed by the movement. If he had been struck by the father's refinement both of physiognomy and manner, what could be said of this

delicate, sensitive countenance, with its large, soft eyes of golden brown—eyes which regarded him gravely and, he thought, with a certain surprise?

“M. Egerton is an American, Armine,” said her father; and then he added, “My daughter has some friends who are Americans.”

“Yes, some very special friends,” said Armine in her musical voice.

“May I ask who they are?” said Egerton. “I find generally that nothing expedites acquaintance like discovering that one has acquaintances in common.”

“The friends of whom I speak are M. and Mlle. D’Antignac,” she answered. “Although their name is French, they are Americans by birth.”

“The D’Antignacs—is it possible!” said Egerton, as much surprised as the Vicomte de Marigny had been when he heard of the acquaintance from the other side. “I am glad to say that I know them very well and admire them immensely. In fact, I esteem it an absolute privilege to know such a man as D’Antignac. He is the truest hero I have ever seen.”

The beautiful eyes gave him a quick look of approval. Then saying simply, “M. d’Antignac’s heroism seems to me beyond all words of praise,” she turned, spoke to her father, and led the way through another draped door into the *salle à manger*, where a small, bright supper-table was set.

“Armine seldom fails to have this ready for me when I come home at night,” said Duchesne as they seated themselves. “She is aware that speaking is exhausting to the vital energies.”

“And I am also aware that you will spend several hours of the night after your return in work,” said the girl. “And then you know, papa, that you never have so much appetite as at this hour.”

“It is true,” said he. “Whether it is good for health I know not; but I am never conscious of appetite at any other hour.”

“But mademoiselle provides so bountifully that I should think you would be rendered unfit for your farther night’s work,” said Leroux, with a glance over the table. “At least I know that I dare not indulge my appetite freely if I have brain-work to do.”

“The word appetite with you and with me, *mon cher*, probably represents very different quantities,” said Duchesne, smiling.

A glance at the two men—one lean as a greyhound, the other with every mark of what phrenologists call alimentive-ness—made this sufficiently evident. Meanwhile Egerton had turned to the young hostess, and, anxious to wake again the look of interest and pleasure in her eyes, said :

“I have to-night had the pleasure of hearing your father speak, mademoiselle, and it has proved indeed the most genuine pleasure. Eloquence like his is so rare that I have seldom, if ever, heard anything to equal it.”

The golden-brown eyes looked at him again ; but what was it that he read in them now—doubt, hesitation, anxiety? It was certainly not the expression he had expected, but one which equally surprised and puzzled him.

“My father has great eloquence—yes, monsieur, I know that well,” she said in a low tone and a little sadly. “But how is it that you have been to hear him? Do you, then, belong to his school of thought?”

“I have a friend,” said Egerton, “who calls me a trifle dipping into all schools of thought but making none of them my own. Absolute conviction of mind is, indeed, no easy thing. I envy a man like your father who has attained to it, who with passionate fervor believes that he holds the true panacea for the ills of humanity.”

“But you do not think that conviction is the only thing necessary?” she said in a still lower tone. “For you know it is possible to hold false principles with passionate fervor.”

“Yes,” he answered, though still more surprised, “that is the point. One *must* test things—beliefs, creeds, theories; and the most of them will not bear testing. I am about to test your father’s,” he added after a moment, “for I should be glad to share his enthusiastic belief in the future of humanity, if possible.”

She did not answer; indeed, at that instant Duchesne addressed Egerton and so interrupted the conversation. Nor was he able to return to the subject, for talk after this was general, and chiefly on the political events of the day, which Duchesne and Leroux discussed with that biting sarcasm which has long been the prevalent tone in France, with all parties, toward the tottering ministries which have ignominiously succeeded each other under the Third Republic. It was not until they returned to the *salon* that Egerton found an opportunity to say a few more words to Armine. “Now, then, my friends, to enjoy your cigars you must return to my den,” Duchesne had said, leading the

way thither and followed promptly by Leroux. But Egerton paused to admire some fragrant violets which filled a dish in the centre of a table near the fire, and then to say to Armine, who stood by the table:

"Have you seen the D'Antignacs lately, mademoiselle?"

"I saw them to-day," she answered. "M. d'Antignac was, for him, rather well—that is, not incapable, from pain, of seeing or talking to any one."

"Then I shall certainly have cause of complaint when I see him next," said Egerton; "for, as it chanced, I called there to-day and was denied admittance."

"Oh! there are many reasons why that might have been," she said eagerly. "He was perhaps by that time too tired to receive a visitor; for when I left the Vicomte de Marigny was with him. And you know his strength is easily exhausted."

"He is a wonderful man," said Egerton, feeling his interest in socialistic theories beginning to wane, and wishing that it were possible to remain in this pleasant room, with the soft firelight, the fragrance of violets, and that charming, sensitive face to study.

"Yes," she said, "he is a wonderful man, I think, and in nothing more wonderful than in the fact that he keeps his intellect undimmed through so much physical suffering. Have you ever heard him talk, M. Egerton, on the great questions that are disturbing so many minds—questions like those of which you are thinking?"

"Now and then I have," said Egerton, again surprised. "But I rather avoid than seek such discussions with him, because he takes as the basis for all his views certain dogmas which I cannot accept."

"Perhaps that is because you do not understand them," said the girl, with a slight smile. "I must not detain you now; but you will probably pardon me for offering you this advice: Give to M. d'Antignac's views the same chance which you are giving now to my father's. Let him explain to you the basis on which they rest."

"Can it be possible that *you* accept that basis?" exclaimed the young man, too much amazed to remember the law of good-breeding which forbids a direct personal question.

How clearly the soft, full eyes met his now! "Why should it surprise you if I do?" she asked quietly. "I should at least be ranged with the great majority of the wise and good and great of the world, should I not? But it does not matter what I believe, monsieur, farther than this: that units make millions,

and that it is better to be on the side of those who build up than of those who tear down."

She drew back with the last words, bending her head a little, and Egerton felt that he had no alternative but to accept the evident dismissal.

"I have come here to-night to hear why we should tear down," he said, smiling; "but an oracle has spoken on the other side when I least expected it, and I should be very ungrateful if I did not heed its utterances. I shall certainly do nothing rashly, mademoiselle; and I have now the honor to bid you good-night."

CHAPTER VI.

ORACLES are more likely to be heeded when their utterances are supported by the soft light of golden-brown eyes than even when enforced by all the eloquence of a practised speaker, which no doubt accounts for the fact that it was a rather divided attention which Egerton gave the tribune of Socialism when he returned to the small study and smoking-room. Not that he failed to be impressed, as he had been before, by Duchesne's eloquence and fervor, and not that he was able to refute the premises from which the other drew his conclusions. The solid earth seemed reeling beneath him as he listened; for how could the man who had no belief in God, and to whom a life beyond the grave was, in the jargon of the day, "unthinkable," answer the stern deductions drawn from materialism by those who have logic enough to see that law, duty, obedience must rest on God, or else that they have no basis at all? He could not answer them; he could only listen silently to the enunciation of that new yet old doctrine which says to men, "Ye shall be as gods," and which declares that the first of the rights of man is the right to rise against his fellow-man and say: "I will be no longer subject unto you; I will no longer toil in pain and darkness while you dwell in the sunshine and fare sumptuously. Since this life is all, we will have our full share of its possessions; and we know now, what we have been long in learning, that the power to take that and anything else is ours!"

As Egerton listened he felt like one who is fascinated yet repelled. He would desire—yes, he said to himself, he would certainly desire—to see the great bulk of humanity freed from the hopeless fetters of toil and poverty which weigh upon it; but in order to reach this end was it necessary to destroy everything

which up to this time the world had revered? Why not, (he asked) engraft the new order on whatever was good of the old?

"Because there is nothing good in the old," was Duchesne's reply; "because it was founded upon falsehood, is rotten throughout and doomed to destruction, root and branch. No; we must break up and utterly fling away the old forms, in order to cast the life of the world into new moulds."

Egerton did not answer; he seemed to be looking meditatively at the smoke from his cigar as it curled upward before him, but in reality he was hearing again Armine's voice as she said:

"It is better to be on the side of those who build up than of those who cast down."

It was the tone of that voice which he carried with him when he went away, more than the passionate accents of Duchesne, though the last also vibrated through his consciousness and seemed to give new meaning to the look of the brilliant capital when he found himself in its streets. Leroux had preceded him in departure—having a night's work to accomplish—so he walked alone down the Avenue de l'Opéra to the great boulevard flashing with lights, where the crowd still flowed up and down and the cafés were still thronged with well-dressed idlers. It is at this time that Paris wears her most seductive aspect, her most siren-like smile; that the brightness in the mere outward appearance of things stirs the coldest blood, makes the quietest pulses beat a little faster; and that Pleasure in her most alluring guise holds out forbidden fruit on every side, saying, "Take and eat."

But to Egerton at this moment it was like a great carnival under which grim forces of destruction were lurking and biding their time—the time when the tocsin of revolution would sound once more in the Faubourg St. Antoine, that old home of revolt, and Montmartre and Belleville would answer back. Was it fancy, or did the hoarse clamor sound already in his ears? He looked at the tranquil air of things around him, at the shops gleaming with luxury and beauty, at the elegant toilettes and smiling faces of those who passed him. "Do they not hear it?" he asked himself. "Do they not catch the low, menacing murmur of the storm which when it breaks will overwhelm all this in ruin? What is to be the end? Is Duchesne right? Must all be destroyed in order to rebuild on a better basis the new civilization? But I am afraid I have not much faith in democratic Utopias."

So thinking, he crossed the Place de l'Opéra, filled with light,

and as he looked up at the front of the new Opera-House, that in its gilded splendor seems a fit type of the order which created it—that order of the Second Empire which strove to establish itself by stimulating to an enormous degree the passion for wealth and outward show in France, and the tradition of which is therefore still dear to the *bourgeois* soul—a recollection suddenly smote him like a blow.

“By Jove!” he cried, speaking aloud, as he stopped short at the corner of the Rue Auber, “I had forgotten entirely that I promised to appear in the Bertrams’ box to-night!”

As he stood still, regarding the ornate front of the great building, it became suddenly alive with movement. The opera was just over—for an opera in Europe never ends before midnight—and the greater part of the audience was pouring out of the main entrance. Egerton hesitated for a moment; then saying to himself, “At least there is a chance,” he crossed over, and, penetrating through the line of carriages, took his place at the head of the steps, which the electric lamps flooded with a light bright as that of day. He had not stood there very long when the chance to which he trusted befriended him. Two ladies, attended by a gentleman who wore a light overcoat above his faultless evening dress, passed near him, and one of them, pausing to lift the long silken train that flowed behind her, saw him and exclaimed involuntarily, “Mr. Egerton!”

In an instant he was descending the steps by her side and saying: “How very fortunate I am! I took my station here with the faint hope of seeing you and apologizing without delay for my failure to appear, as I promised, in your box to-night.”

She turned a very handsome head and regarded him with a pair of proud, bright eyes.

“It is a pity that you should have taken any trouble for that end,” she said carelessly. “Of course when mamma asked you to look in on us she only meant if you cared to do so.”

“I should have cared exceedingly,” he said; “but can you conceive that I absolutely forgot the opera in the excitement of attending a Socialist meeting in Montmartre?”

She laughed slightly. “Yes,” she said, “I can very well conceive it. An opera must seem very stale and flat compared to such a new entertainment. And did it amuse you?”

“I was not in search of amusement so much as of new ideas,” he answered; “and it has certainly given me those.”

“You are to be congratulated, then,” said the lady, with the

faintest possible shade of mocking in her voice. "We are all, I think, dreadfully in want of new ideas. I should not mind journeying to Montmartre myself in search of them."

"A want of ideas of any kind is the last complaint I should judge you likely to suffer from," said Egerton gallantly, yet with a shade of possible sarcasm in his voice as subtle as the mockery in her own had been.

"But I believe it is a question whether ideas are innate or not," said she coolly. "Therefore one must occasionally receive some from the outside; and I should welcome even Socialism as a relief from social platitudes."

At this moment the lady in front turned around, saying quickly, "Why, where is Sibyl?" And then she, too, exclaimed, "Mr. Egerton!"

"Good-evening, my dear Mrs. Bertram," said Egerton, uncovering. "I have just been expressing to Miss Bertram my deep regret at not having enjoyed part of the opera with you."

"A very hypocritical regret, I should think," said Miss Bertram, "considering that you were so much better employed."

"That raises the question, Egerton, how were you employed?" asked the gentleman, who had turned also.

"Ah! Talford, how are you?" said Egerton, recognizing him. "I confess," he went on, smiling, "that I am not so certain as Miss Bertram appears to be that I *was* better employed. I have been to a Red-Republican meeting in Montmartre."

Mrs. Bertram uttered a slight exclamation indicative of well-bred horror. "What could possibly have taken you to such a dreadful place?" she asked.

"And what did you learn after you got there?" inquired the gentleman called Talford.

"Well, for one thing I learned that opera-going will soon be an obsolete amusement," said Egerton, who had a sensation as if an ocean and not a few streets must surely divide this world from that which he had so lately left.

"I do not feel just now as if I should deplore that very much," said the younger lady. "One grows tired of operas which last to this hour; composers should have some mercy. Come, mamma, here is our carriage."

After they had been put into it the elder lady leaned forward to say good-night again to both gentlemen, and add with some *empressement* to Egerton: "Come soon and tell us what the Red Republicans are going to do."

As the carriage drove off, the two men turned by a simul-

taneous movement and walked along the broad pavement in silence for a moment. Then Mr. Talford said :

"Mrs. Bertram regards you with favor."

"It is more than Miss Bertram does, then," said Egerton, with a laugh. "A more disdainful young lady it has seldom been my fortune to meet."

"She is decidedly original," said the other. "One never knows what she will say or do next. But she is very clever and charming, if a little incomprehensible."

"She is very clever and no doubt very charming," said Egerton ; "but in my case I usually find the sense of being puzzled greater than the sense of being charmed."

"I like a woman who is able to puzzle one," said his companion. "Most of them are very transparent—not because they have not the will to be otherwise, but because one has learned to see so clearly through all their little artifices. Now, if Miss Bertram has artifices they are not of the usual order, and so one does not see through them."

"The point with you, then, is not whether artifice exists, but whether, like the highest art, it is able to conceal itself," said Egerton.

"Oh! for the matter of that," said the other carelessly, "you cannot expect a woman to be a woman without artifice of some kind."

"Can one not?" said Egerton meditatively. They were by this time crossing the Place, and he glanced down the broad Avenue de l'Opéra toward the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs. What artifice had the direct glance of those soft, golden eyes concealed? "You ought to know better than I," he went on after a moment. "At least I am quite willing to admit that your experience has been much greater than mine."

"So much the better for you, my dear fellow," said the other. "One begins to learn after a while, like that very *blasé* gentleman King Solomon, that most things are vanity ; and women, unfortunately, are no exception to the rule."

He spoke quietly, but with the decision of one who utters a truth upon a subject with which he is thoroughly familiar. And certainly if the experience of twenty years can qualify a man to pronounce a judgment, Marmaduke Talford was qualified to pronounce one upon the fair sex. In many parts of the civilized world had he studied it during that period ; at the feet of many enchantresses had he remained—for a time. But no spell had ever been great enough to hold him long, nor firm even to rivet

round him the fetters of matrimony. Now he had reached the eminence of forty years, and was conscious that his blonde hair was growing thin on the top of his head. Perhaps these things made him a little thoughtful; at all events, his friends began to fancy that they saw a change in him. He had never been a prodigal, had never wasted his substance nor lived riotously; but there could be no doubt that he had gone deeply into pleasure—though with a certain fastidiousness and discretion which characterized him in most things—and if he now began to say, *Vanitas vanitatum*, it was because he, too, had indeed learned, like the king of Israel, that “all things are vanity”—after one has exhausted them.

The feeling of this was certainly uppermost in his mind; for, after a pause which Egerton did not break, he went on speaking: “After all, it is a mistake to leave one’s self nothing to believe in. And ignorance is the parent of belief. Therefore whatever one wishes to believe in one must remain in comparative ignorance of. Women, for example—since we are speaking of them—if you wish to cherish the common superstition about feminine virtues, do not make any attempt to know the sex other than superficially.”

“That is rather an appalling doctrine,” said Egerton. “Do you not think it possible that you may have been unfortunate in your experiences?”

“I am very sure that I have not been,” said Talford. “On the contrary, I am inclined to think that I have been fortunate when I compare my experiences with those of others.”

“And you make your axiom general in its application?” said Egerton. “You think that ignorance is the only ground for belief in anything?”

“I not only think so, but I am certain of it,” answered the other; “and if it is not a very cheerful realization—well, we cannot help that, you know. One has either to shut one’s eyes and decide to be deluded, or to open them and face the truth.”

Then said Egerton, like Pilate of old: “What is truth? It must be something absolute in itself, and not a mere negative state of universal scepticism.”

The other shrugged his shoulders slightly. “I should define it, then,” he said, “as what we can see, and feel, and touch: the material world with its goods and its pleasures, the fact that we are alive and the equally undoubted fact that we must die—*voilà tout!* If any man tells me that he believes aught beyond these things, I say to myself, ‘It may be so, but you are either

deceived or a deceiver.' See, *mon cher*—it is not often that I am betrayed into this vein of moralizing—but is it not evident that it must be so? For example, we hear enthusiasts talking of the glorious virtues of humanity—this humanity which has been robbing and cheating and cutting each other's throats as long as history has any record of it, and which a little experience of men will soon assure us is only likely to continue the same course, with variations, in the time to come. We hear of the beauty of universal brotherhood, and of a sublime altruism which is some day soon to display itself. Bah! these things will do for dreamers in their closets, ignorant of the practical world. But men of the world know that the millennium was never farther off than now, when mankind is realizing more than ever that the gold which buys all things—including men and women—is the only secure good of life, and that pleasure is its only true end."

There was a moment's silence. On those last words the brilliant scene around them was a striking commentary. But Egerton's thoughts went back to a very different scene—to the crowded homes of Montmartre, and the eager, resolute faces of those who listened to other conclusions drawn from the same doctrine that life is all, that wealth rules the world, and pleasure is the supreme good. Presently he said, in the tone of one who speaks a thought aloud: "I wonder what it will be?"

"What?" asked Talford, a little surprised.

The other roused himself. "Why, the result of the struggle," he said, "between men like you—and you are but the type of a large and constantly increasing class—and some others to whom I have been listening to-night. It is a struggle bound to come, you know."

"I suppose so," answered Talford indifferently, "though I do not pay much attention to the *blague* of Socialists and Anarchists. But I can tell you what in my opinion will be the result: it will be wild uproar, much killing on all sides, and then the final end of that ridiculous modern farce called the rule of the people. Power will assert itself in one form or another, with a single strong hand, and make an end for ever of the insane folly which declares that a thinking minority shall be ruled by an ignorant and brutal majority."

"Thank you," said Egerton, with a smile. "Your opinion is exceedingly clear, and you and I may not be much older when we shall see it verified or disproved. Meanwhile, I have received a number of sufficiently varied impressions to-night, which will furnish me with food for meditation."

Talford laughed, and, looking up at the Madeleine, by which they were now passing, said: "You live in this neighborhood, do you not?"

"Yes, my apartment is yonder," answered Egerton, nodding toward a house which occupied the corner of a street running into the boulevard. "I often dream in the morning before I wake that I am wandering in the gardens of Cashmere; that rises from the odors of the flower-market held here, which penetrate into my chamber."

"Ah!" said the other, "you are at the age for flowers, real or metaphorical. Enjoy your youth, happy man! Do not waste one golden hour in listening to Socialist madmen. That is the best advice I can give you; and now *bon soir*."

CHAPTER VII.

It chanced that the next morning, being Wednesday and therefore one of the days of the flower-market of the Madeleine, Egerton was waked by those delightful odors of which he had spoken; and in some subtle way the fragrance brought before him a fair face with a pair of proud gray eyes, and it occurred to him that in order to make his peace with Miss Bertram it might be well to send her some of the flowers, of which he knew that she was extravagantly fond.

Nor can it be said that this idea commended itself to him solely as a matter of social duty. He had spoken truly in saying to Talford that she puzzled more than she charmed him; but there could be no doubt that she charmed him in considerable degree. She was a very pretty and a very clever woman, whom he sometimes thought might prove dangerously attractive to him if she had been a shade less incomprehensible, less capricious, and less haughty. A man does not like to be puzzled, but still less does he like to be treated with scorn when in no way conscious of deserving such treatment—when, indeed, the world in general conveys the impression to his mind that he has a right to think very well of himself. Now, with Sibyl Bertram, Egerton had frequently a sense of being weighed in the balance and found wanting; and though vanity was not inordinately developed in him, he naturally felt that such an attitude on her part was not only unflattering but manifestly unjust. If he had made any pretensions the matter would have been different, since whoever makes pretensions inevitably challenges

criticism ; but it would be difficult for any one to make fewer than he did—a fact which conduced not a little to his popularity. For a man who asserts no disagreeable intellectual superiority over his fellow-beings, yet who is unobtrusively clever and undeniably well-bred, is generally certain of popularity, even without the farther endowments of good looks and wealth. These endowments, however, Egerton possessed, and he was therefore the less accustomed to that position of being weighed and found wanting in which Miss Bertram placed him. He had sometimes tried to persuade himself that it was all mere fancy on his part ; but there had been times when the language of the gray eyes was too plain to be mistaken, when he had felt himself looked through and through, and judged to be a very inferior sort of creature.

But if the daughter was disdainful and incomprehensible, the mother was always cordial and agreeable, with a peculiar charm and warmth of manner which had more than once suggested the thought to Egerton that she too perceived, and wished to make amends for, her daughter's hard judgment. There was another thought which might have suggested itself to a man so eligible ; but it has already been said that he was not greatly afflicted with vanity, and it may be added that he was not at all afflicted with the coarseness of mind which, together with vanity, makes a man suspect a matrimonial snare in every woman's civility. Instead of suspecting that Mrs. Bertram wished to entrap him as a suitor for her daughter, he felt simply grateful for an unvarying kindness which contrasted strikingly with that young lady's exceedingly variable manner ; and it was the thought of the mother rather more than of the daughter which finally decided him to send the flowers, especially when he remembered that it was their reception-day.

So a basket of cut flowers, freshly beautiful and fragrant, made its appearance in due time, and was presented, with Mr. Egerton's compliments, to Mrs. and Miss Bertram as they sat at breakfast in their pleasant apartment in the neighborhood of the Parc Monceaux. The elder lady uttered an exclamation of pleasure when she saw the lavish supply.

"Oh ! what lovely flowers," she said. "See, Sibyl, are they not exquisite ? Our drawing-room will be like a bower to-day. Mr. Egerton is certainly charming."

"You mean that his flowers are," said Sibyl, looking up with a smile from a little bright-eyed Skye terrier to whom she was administering sugar. "But they *are* delicious !" she added,

unable to resist their beauty as her eye fell on them. She held out her hand for the basket and almost buried her face in the fragrant blossoms. "How I love flowers!" she said, as if to herself. "They are among the few satisfactory things in life." Then, glancing at her mother, she added: "This is Mr. Egerton's apology for having forgotten our existence last night, mamma."

"Forgetting an engagement—which was hardly an engagement—and forgetting our existence are different things," said her mother. "I think you are scarcely just to Mr. Egerton, Sibyl."

Sibyl made a slight gesture of indifference as she put the basket down again on the table. "I do not feel sufficient interest in him to be unjust," she said; "and I am quite willing for him to forget our existence as often as he likes, provided he sends such an apology as this. A basket of flowers is much better than an hour of his or any other man's society, at the opera or elsewhere."

Mrs. Bertram elevated her eyebrows slightly as she looked at her daughter. For this young lady occasionally puzzled her as well as other people. "It is not like you to affect to despise men's society," she said.

"I am not affecting to despise it," answered Sibyl. "I like it very much, as you know—that is, I like the society of men of sense. But I would certainly not exchange this basket of flowers for an hour of the society of any special man, even if he were capable of giving me a new idea—which Mr. Egerton is not."

"New ideas are not to be picked up like flowers," said Mrs. Bertram, without adding that she thought her daughter had already more than enough of these very objectionable articles. "And I confess that I do not understand why you should think so poorly of Mr. Egerton. I do not pretend to be intellectual, but he has always struck me as very clever as well as very pleasant."

"He is clever enough, I believe," said Sibyl carelessly—"that is, he is a man of culture; but he always gives me the impression of a man who lives merely on the surface of life. He does not think sufficiently of any new ideas, or if he has them he does not take the trouble to impart them."

"But," said the elder lady, "you do not intend to demand of all your acquaintances that they shall have new ideas to impart to you? Because if so—"

"I shall certainly be disappointed," said Miss Bertram with a laugh. "No, do not be afraid. I have not quite lost my senses."

But the general dearth of ideas only makes me more grateful to those who have some; and, now that I think of it, Mr. Egerton has probably begun to realize his deficiency, for he remarked last night that it was in search of something of the kind that he had gone to the Socialist meeting in Montmartre."

"A most extraordinary place to go for them," said Mrs. Bertram. "I cannot understand such a freak in a man of sense—and that Mr. Egerton *is*."

"Oh! he went, no doubt, from mere curiosity," said Sibyl. "I fancy it is that and the necessity to kill time which take him to most places. But how a man can lead such a life," she added with sudden energy, "in a world where there is so much to be thought and said and done, I confess that I cannot understand!"

"What do you expect him to do?" asked her mother. "You know he inherited a large fortune; why should he, therefore, trouble himself with business?"

"That is the one idea which an American has of doing something—making money," said Sibyl. "Forgive me, mamma, but do you really think there is nothing else to be done—nothing better worth doing?"

"Of course I do not think so; of course I know that there are many things better worth doing," said Mrs. Bertram, though she did not specify what these things were; "but I do not see what you can expect a young man like Mr. Egerton to do except amuse himself, for a time at least."

"That is just the point," returned the young lady calmly. "I do not in the least expect him to do anything else. I am quite sure that he will never do anything else. Here, Fluff! do you want another lump of sugar?"

Fluff replied, with a short bark and one or two eager bounds, that he did want it, and Mrs. Bertram abandoned the subject of Egerton and his real or imaginary shortcomings, saying to herself, with a slight sigh, that it was quite certain one could not have everything, but that she should have been glad if Sibyl had been a little less original. Though far from being herself the scheming mother common in fiction and not wholly unknown in real life, she had more than once thought what a pleasant and satisfactory son-in-law Egerton would make if he would fall in love with Sibyl, and if Sibyl were like other girls and would accept the fortune placed before her. But it was now plain that this castle in the air would never be realized on the solid earth; and, with another sigh, she took up the flowers and carried them away.

They were filling the *salon* with their fragrance when Egerton entered it late in the afternoon of the same day. A glow of golden sunset light was also filling it and bringing out all the harmonious tints of the hangings and furniture; for this room was not in the least like an ordinary Parisian apartment, but had been the home of the Bertrams long enough for them to impress a very distinctive character upon it. Needless to say this character was æsthetic in the highest degree, for a young lady so devoted to new ideas as Miss Bertram was not likely to follow other than the latest light in decorative art. Then, too, the mother and daughter had travelled much and had gathered in numerous places many curious and pretty things. All of these—the richly-mingled colors of Eastern stuffs picked up in Algerian and Moorish bazaars; the gleaming crystal frames of Venetian mirrors, with their suggestions of the deep canals and the green sea-water; the beautiful wood-carving of Tyrolean villagers, the rich hues of old Spanish leather, with pictures and china, quaint screens and peacock fans—all made, it seemed to Egerton, a very suitable background for Sibyl Bertram's presence. And although when she went out she was Parisian in her toilette from her hat to her boots, she had a fashion, when she received her friends at home, of arraying herself in a different manner. It was not that extreme artistic dressing which originated in London, and with which (through caricatures at least) the eyes of all the world are familiar now. Like most American women, Sibyl had too much good taste to make herself æsthetically ridiculous; but she struck a medium of graceful picturesqueness which suited her admirably.

For she was not in the least a line-and-measure beauty. The brilliant, changing face could not be judged by any acknowledged standard, but the charm of it was so great that few people were inclined to judge it at all. The pellucid skin; the perfectly shaped if rather large mouth; the luminous gray eyes, which brightened and darkened with every passing thought; and the broad, fair brow, from which thick, soft masses of bronze-brown hair waved, made up a whole which to the modern taste was more attractive than classic loveliness. The gift of expression was hers also in remarkable degree, and when she spoke with any earnestness her voice had tones of wonderful sweetness.

On this afternoon she wore, as usual when at home, a dress more fanciful than fashionable. It was a black brocaded silk of softest, richest fabric, cut in simple but beautiful lines, slashed

here and there to introduce a trimming of old gold, which also appeared in the puff that headed the sleeves, which otherwise fitted the arms tightly until they terminated in a fall of rich yellow lace below the elbow. The square-cut neck, out of which the white, columnar throat rose, was also surrounded with this lace, and a cluster of deep yellow roses was fastened in front. It was on this charming figure that Egerton's glance fell when he first entered the room, though she was standing at some distance from him, talking to Mr. Talford, while a slanting stream of sunshine touched her hair, and also brought out the strange, deep harmonies of form and tint in a Japanese screen behind her.

It was Mrs. Bertram who, at his entrance, rose from the sofa where she was sitting and came forward to receive him with her usual cordial graciousness.

"I have hoped that you would not forget us to-day," she said. "I want to thank you for the beautiful flowers you sent. See! they welcome you," she added, with a smile, motioning to a table which bore part of them arranged in some graceful vases of Vallauris ware.

Egerton replied to the effect that he was delighted if the flowers gave her pleasure, but he wished to himself that, instead of fragrant lilies-of-the-valley and delicate white and pink-tinted roses, he had chosen such golden-hearted ones as those which Miss Bertram wore. "But perhaps she would not have worn them if I had sent them," he thought.

He followed Mrs. Bertram to the sofa where she had been sitting, and shook hands with the elderly lady—a member of the American colony, whom he knew well—to whom she had been talking. A pretty, blonde young lady who sat in a low chair near by, drinking a cup of tea and chattering volubly to a young man who stood before her, also held out her hand to him.

"How do you do, Mr. Egerton?" she said. "I have not seen you in an age. Why do you never come to see us nowadays?"

"My dear Miss Dorrance, why are you never at home when I do myself that honor?" he replied.

"Because you do not come at the right time, I presume," she answered. "But, indeed, that is the case with so many of our friends—one misses them so by being out—that I have decided on a reception-day. It did not seem worth while when we first arrived in Paris, but it has now become necessary. Hereafter, then, we shall be happy to see you on any and every Friday."

"You are very good; I shall certainly remember to pay my respects. And you are still at the Hôtel du Rhin?"

"Dear me! no; have I not seen you since we went into apartments? The doctors decided that mamma must remain here for some months, so papa telegraphed to Cousin Duke to settle us comfortably, and he has put us into an apartment, with servants to look after, which I consider a nuisance."

"It is probably quieter and better for Mrs. Dorrance, though," said Egerton. "I hope that her health has improved?"

"Oh! very much. She is able to take a short drive every afternoon. She is in the Bois now—at least she was to send the carriage for me when she returned, and it has not yet arrived."

At this moment, however, a servant entered—a pretty, white-capped maid—who, while she presented Egerton with a cup of tea, announced to Miss Dorrance that her carriage waited. At this the young lady rose and, with a rustle of silk, crossed the floor to where Sibyl stood, still talking to Mr. Talford.

"Good-by, my dear," she said. "I must run away now. Do come to see us soon. You know mamma always enjoys your visits so much. Cousin Duke, are you coming with me?"

Mr. Talford signified that he was, saying with a smile: "Miss Bertram will have no more attention to bestow upon me, since here is Egerton, who can tell her, on the best authority, all about the next revolution."

"Are you interested in revolutions, Sibyl?" inquired Miss Dorrance, opening her eyes a little.

"Immensely," answered Sibyl, with her slightly mocking accent. Then, as Egerton drew near, she held out her hand to him with a very graceful show of cordiality.

"And what does Mr. Egerton know about them?" pursued Miss Dorrance. "I should not think it was the kind of thing *he* was likely to be interested in."

"Your penetration in judging character does you infinite credit, my dear Miss Dorrance," said Egerton; "but it is something which may before long concern us all so closely that I am only, like a wise man, trying to gain some idea of the nature of the coming storm."

"I hope that you will give your friends the benefit of your information, then," she said, "so that they can get away in time. But I do hope we will be able to finish the present season. Everything is charming in Paris just now."

"As far as my means of information will allow me to speak,"

said Egerton, "I think I can assure you that you will at least be able to finish your spring shopping before milliners and modistes are whelmed."

"They never will be," said she with confidence. "If there was a revolution to-morrow I am sure that Paris would set the fashion for the world the day after."

"That is very true," said Egerton. "But it might be the fashion of the *bonnet rouge*."

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER Miss Dorrance had withdrawn, attended by her cousin, and also by the young gentleman to whom she had been devoting her conversational powers when Egerton entered, the latter felt as if fate was kind to him. The pretty room, the sunset light, the fragrance of flowers, and Sibyl Bertram's fair face made a whole very pleasing to the artistic perceptions which he possessed in considerable degree. And he fancied that this face regarded him with a kinder expression than usual, as its owner sat down in a quaint, luxurious chair and motioned him to another.

"I hope you have come to tell me about the Socialist meeting," she said. "I have a great curiosity with regard to those people. If I were a man I should long since have gone to hear what they had to say. It seems to me that in these latter days they are the only people who are in earnest."

"They are certainly in earnest," said Egerton: "terribly in earnest you would think, if you heard them. I confess that it makes one a little uncomfortable. Earthquakes may have their uses; but to feel one's house trembling around one—the sensation is not pleasant."

"But if it fell one would find one's self in a fresher, purer air," she said. "That might be worth the shock. One feels sometimes almost suffocated by the artificial atmosphere in which we live."

Egerton glanced around him with a smile. "If it fell," he said, "it might carry all the setting of your life with it, and you can hardly fancy what it would be to find yourself in a crude, hard existence, without anything soft or delicate or beautiful about you."

"And do you think, then, that the setting of life is of such importance to me?" she asked, with a subtle tone of scorn which he had often before heard in her voice.

"I think that it must be of importance to all people who love beauty as you most surely love it," he answered.

"Yes, I love it," she said. "But beauty such as this"—she made a slight, disdainful motion of her hand toward her surroundings—"is not to be compared to the higher beauty of thought and feeling and conduct. And if one had *that* one might willingly, nay, gladly, let the other go."

"Perhaps one might," he said, though somewhat surprised, "if one were certain of the higher beauty. But, before resigning what one has, one would like to be sure of what one is to gain."

"If we waited to be sure we would never gain anything," she replied quickly. "All great things are achieved by faith and courage."

"The courage might be easily forthcoming," he said, as if to himself; "but where is one to find the faith?"

There was a moment's silence. Apparently Miss Bertram was not ready with an answer to that question. She looked away from him, out of the window, through which there was a glimpse of the green tree-tops of the Parc Monceaux, golden in the last light of evening. An animated twitter of conversation came from the sofa where Mrs. Bertram and her visitor sat, but no distinct words reached these two who suddenly found themselves halting before the great problem of modern life. It was Egerton who at length spoke again.

"I can imagine nothing," he said, "which would be a more desirable possession than such a faith, as I can imagine nothing too arduous to be borne, nothing too great to be attempted, if one were so happy as to possess it. But to desire a thing is not to see one's way clear to obtaining it. One may try to delude one's self into a state of enthusiasm for this or that cause; but deep underneath is the chilling sense, which sooner or later will assert itself, that the feeling has a fictitious basis and that there really is nothing worth troubling one's self about in the world."

"That may be so with you and men like you," said Sibyl, turning her eyes back on him. "But there are others, many others, in the world who think differently."

"Yes," he said, "and I envy them. I do more than that—I try to share their beliefs. But I have either too much logic or too little enthusiasm. I have never been able to do so. And, honestly, Miss Bertram, are you much better off? Have you a strong faith in anything?"

Now, this was taking an unfair advantage, Sibyl felt. It was not pleasant for her, who had always made evident her contempt for this pleasant trifler, to be forced to own that she was not much better off in the matter of earnest belief than he was. She colored and hesitated a little before replying. Then she said with some emphasis:

"Yes; I have faith in heroism and virtue and unselfishness, and in the ultimate triumph of good over evil."

"Have you?" said Egerton, smiling a little. "But can you define in what heroism and virtue and unselfishness consist? And what form will the triumph of good over evil take? Nay, what *is* good and what *is* evil? You see this is an age of universal scepticism and the very foundations of thought are tottering."

"One thing at least is not tottering, but daily growing stronger," she said, "and that is our conception of the imperative duty which we owe to those around us—I mean to all humanity."

"That certainly is the creed which is being proclaimed on all sides as the new hope of mankind," he answered, "and therefore I went last night to hear the fullest and most complete exposition of it."

"And what did you hear?" she asked a little eagerly. "You have not told me yet."

"What I heard," he answered, "was the logical outcome of modern political and religious theories. I heard a democracy preached which will not tolerate a plutocracy more than an aristocracy—which demands an equal share of the goods of life for all, and which will not hesitate at any means to gain this end. I heard the destruction of all forms of government, the annihilation of all existing society, decreed; and I heard the ideal of the future painted—that future in which, recognizing fully that there is and can be no certainty of any future life, man is to be trained to make the utmost of this present existence, and put his hopes not in any personal immortality but in the progress of his race. I must add, also, that these statements which I make so barely were presented with an eloquence which I have never heard equalled."

"By whom?"

"One of the leaders of the extreme Red-Republican party, whose name is Duchesne. If earnestness is your ideal he would be a man after your heart. There is in him none of the stuff of which Gambettas and Clémenceaus are made—that is, the stuff

of the demagogue who inflames the people with wild and dangerous doctrines merely to serve his own ends and secure his own aggrandizement. This man has a strong nature, a deep, fiery heart, and I do not think there is a doubt of his absolute sincerity. He would die on a barricade to-morrow, if he thought that his death would serve the cause of humanity."

"Ah!" said she quickly, with a sudden light in her eyes, "I should like to know such a man. One grows weary of men who believe nothing, who hope nothing, who are plunged in selfishness and indifferentism."

Egerton had an uncomfortable feeling that he was one of the men thus described, but he said with a smile: "It might be possible for you to know him, if you really wished to do so. He is not a man of the people, though he espouses their cause as passionately as if he were. Everything about him indicates inherited as well as personal refinement. And he has a charming daughter with a face like a poem."

"So you have not only heard him speak in public—you know him?" said Miss Bertram, with some surprise.

"I have that pleasure, though my acquaintance only dates from yesterday evening. But having been presented to him after the meeting, he invited me to his house, in order that he might expound the socialistic doctrine more at length; and there I met the daughter."

"Who is, of course, an enthusiastic Socialist also."

"It would seem to follow naturally that she should be; yet I do not think she is. As far as I was able to interpret a few words which she said to me, they were words of warning rather than encouragement."

"Of warning? How strange! Against what?"

"Against being led to join the party of destruction."

"But if they are pledged to destroy, is it not in order that they may rebuild on a better basis?"

"That is what they declare, and men like Duchesne descant with passionate eloquence on the wonderful fabric which will rise upon the new foundations. But it is part of the wisdom of experience to distrust untried theories."

"Exactly," she said sarcastically. "That has always been the wisdom of experience—to endeavor as far as possible to retard human progress. But if there had not been people in all ages to listen to and believe in some untried theories we should still be dwelling in caves, most likely."

"Then we should not be tormented with the problems of

modern civilization," replied Egerton; "and that would be a most decided gain."

But it was evident that his view of matters could by no possibility please Miss Bertram. There was an incorrigible lightness about him which provoked her now as ever.

"Yes," she said, "it would no doubt be much pleasanter for those whom chance has elevated to the top of fortune's ladder, if those below would only be quiet, take their few crumbs of daily food, live in penury, die in misery, and make no clamor for some better ordering of affairs. But people who think of something besides enjoying life are willing to bear their share of the burden of modern perplexity, if out of all the upheaval and revolt a juster social state may be evolved."

The old note of scorn was in her voice, but for once Egerton did not heed it. He was thinking more of the eloquent expression of her face, of the light in her fine eyes.

"I see," he said, "that you are deeply imbued with the social theories of the time. But, though you talk of perplexity, you seem to have scant sympathy with it. You are apparently unable to realize that one may stand in doubt amid this strife of ideas, this war of contradictions."

"No," she answered, "I am not unable to realize a state of doubt, for it is very much my own; but I confess that I cannot understand an attitude of indifference in the face of a strife on which so much depends."

"I am not indifferent," he said. "Just as one may have a heart without wearing it on one's sleeve for daws to peck at, so one may feel the need for some anchor for one's thought, some end for one's life, without proclaiming such a need all the time in tragic accents."

She looked at him for an instant before replying, and then she said: "I realize that also. But it seems to me that one ought to be able to find such an end."

"Perhaps one ought," he said. "Probably it is my fault as well as my misfortune that I have not found it. But, at least, I am endeavoring to do so. And you hardly need for me to tell you that in these days the matter is not easy, for all old standards are losing or have lost their value, and everything which we have taken on faith is being questioned, analyzed, and flung aside. But this grows too egotistical. Pray forgive me; let us talk of something less serious."

"Do you remember what I said to you last night?" she asked, with a slight smile. "I said that I should be glad to hear

something besides social platitudes. You have given me something else, and I am obliged to you—as much obliged as for the flowers, for which I have not yet thanked you.”

“I wish I had been fortunate enough to send you some yellow roses,” said Egerton, looking at those which she wore.

“Oh! I like the others best,” she answered carelessly. “It is only by an accident, or rather by the necessity of harmony in toilette, that I am wearing these to-day.”

Yet they seemed made for her, Egerton thought, their fragrant splendor matching her fair, stately beauty and the rich dress of black and gold, in which she looked like a figure stepped from one of Titian’s pictures. Other visitors coming in just then, he took his leave a few minutes later. But he seemed to carry the fragrance of the roses with him—a fragrance which by contrast recalled that of the violets that had filled Armine’s *salon* with their sweet, subtle odor the night before—and seemed to set beside the woman he had left the slender figure, the delicate, sensitive face and soft, dark eyes of the Socialist’s daughter.

CHAPTER IX.

It was on the day after his visit to Miss Bertram that Egerton again made his appearance at the door of the D’Antignac apartment, and on this occasion was admitted. He was received by Hélène with great cordiality, and taken at once to her brother’s room, where he found the scene which had grown familiar to him, as to many others—the bright chamber with its broad windows, its sunshine and pictures and flowers, and the couch where, with pathetic immobility, lay the wreck of a man’s strong frame, and where out of a pale, suffering-stamped face looked such grave, serene eyes.

Those eyes glanced up as the door opened, and with a smile D’Antignac laid down a book which he was reading to hold out a wasted hand. “A friend who has been long absent is doubly welcome,” he said, with his peculiar charm of tone and manner.

“That ought to depend upon the reason of the absence,” said Egerton, responding to the smile.

The other shook his head. “One must take for granted that the reason has been good,” he said. “We should never doubt a friend. However, you may give an account of yourself, if you like.”

"The account, then, will include an attempt to see you not many days ago. I was sorry to have failed."

"I was sorry, too. But I did not hear of the visit till you were gone."

"It was I who gave the order that Raoul should be denied to any one who called," said Hélène.

"Oh! I am never surprised and certainly never offended at being turned away," said Egerton. "On the contrary, I take it as a special favor when I am admitted."

"And how ought I to take a visit from one who has naturally many more entertaining places to go than to the chamber of an invalid?" asked D'Antignac. "But, besides giving me pleasure, you are performing one of the corporal works of mercy—which is a good thing for you, though I dare say you know very little about the corporal works of mercy."

"I must confess I don't know much," answered Egerton, "though I am glad to be performing one. But if there is any merit connected with such works, I am sure my visit to you cannot possibly be classed among them, as it gives me too much pleasure."

"If flattery could spoil me—as it is more than likely that it does—my friends give me enough for the purpose," said D'Antignac. "But sit down and tell me about yourself. What have you been doing since I saw you last?"

"That," said Egerton as he sat down, "would make a long story, if it were worth telling—which it is not. Since I was here last I have, with one exception, done nothing worth remembering for five minutes."

"You are severe on yourself," said Hélène.

"If that is severity it will apply very justly to the most of my life," said the young man quite seriously. "But you do not ask what is the one noteworthy exception."

"We wait for you to tell us," said D'Antignac.

"Remember, then, that I define it as noteworthy, not praiseworthy; for I am afraid of falling in your good opinion when you hear that I have attended a Socialist meeting."

"There is no reason why you should suffer such a fall from the mere fact of attending the meeting," said D'Antignac. "The question is, *Why* did you attend it?"

"From curiosity chiefly. I have a friend who is a student over in the Quartier Latin, a fiery Red Republican, and I have heard him talk a great deal of a man of remarkable genius and eloquence who is one of the leaders of the extreme Socialists."

Now, you know, although one hears a great deal about Socialism, it is generally only from one point of view; and I always like to hear both sides of a question. So I went with a friend of my friend's—a Bohemian journalist, also Red Republican—to hear this revolutionary tribune. He is indeed a man of remarkable eloquence, and after the meeting was over my companion introduced me to him, when I found him to be that singular anomaly, a gentleman-Socialist. His name is Duchesne."

D'Antignac smiled. "I felt sure that you would name him," he said. "And what then? Did he convert you to his doctrine?"

"Hardly. I am not prepared to assist in cutting my own throat. Yet I should not answer for myself if I were subjected to his influence often. He has not only the gift of persuasion and the power of eloquence in extraordinary degree, but he is well supplied with the heavy artillery of argument. And I must admit that some of the problems of the time seem to me insoluble."

"So they are," said the other quietly, "in the light of anything that you can bring to bear upon them. You have gained a step if you recognize that. Many men either deny the existence of these problems or have a panacea ready for all the evils that afflict the world."

"I have nothing of the kind," said Egerton. "The evils seem to me so gigantic and the remedies proposed either so ineffectual or so terrible that I have a sense of despair in contemplating the picture which human society presents."

"That is a common state of the most thoughtful minds," said D'Antignac. "Pessimism is one of the rapidly growing evils of the days on which we have fallen. Whoever is without faith, yet has a sufficiently clear vision to see the tendency of the age, and not only the tendency of this age but the tendency of all ages, 'if in this life only we have hope,' must fall into it."

"I am not a pessimist," said Egerton, "nor do I think that I could ever become one. These things are very much matters of temperament, you know. But if I am not a pessimist, I am still less an optimist of the positive school—one of those who see the future of the world rose-colored by the light of their own imaginations. I am quite sure that the humanity which we know, and have known, through history, for ages, will undergo no great change in the time to come—that selfishness will still rule men and crime will still exist among them."

"In other words, original sin will still remain with its conse-

quences," said D'Antignac. "But original sin is one of the things which positive thinkers ignore. To them humanity only needs to be relieved from the belief in eternity and the fear of God to become great and good, wise and benevolent. The anarchists—who are the most perfect developments of advanced thought—do not, it is true, exhibit these virtues yet in transcendent degree. But perhaps when they have assassinated all rulers, slaughtered all capitalists, overthrown all governments, and demolished all altars, they may begin to do so."

"Men like Duchesne at least think so," said Egerton. "He gives me the impression of being an honest enthusiast—one who looks reluctantly at the first act of destruction, but who sees beyond it the new earth, the new civilization, the new creed of the future."

"Such dreamers are to be pitied," said D'Antignac, "but they are none the less accountable because self-deceived. The spirit which fills them—the spirit which is as far as possible removed from the reason which they profess to adore—is shown in the violence of their animosity toward the idea of revealed religion, of a law which all men are bound to obey under a penalty of spiritual death."

"That reminds me," said Egerton, "that if the eloquent Socialist 'almost persuaded' me, an oracle of a different kind spoke under his own roof-tree, and directed me to you."

"It is not difficult for me to imagine who that was," said D'Antignac. "You met Armine."

"Mlle. Duchesne? Yes, I met her, and was exceedingly interested. No doubt she would be interesting under any circumstances; but as the daughter of a fiery Socialist, and *your* friend, you will confess that was enough to stimulate my curiosity."

Mlle. d'Antignac laughed. "Quite enough," she remarked. "But we have known Armine for a long time. She was hardly out of childhood when I met her first—the most slender, quiet creature, but always with that poetic face and those sibylline eyes. Before I had exchanged a word with her—before I knew who she was—I felt instinctively sorry for her. And you may be sure I feel sorry for her now."

"Do you mean that you are sorry for her because her father is a Socialist?" asked Egerton.

"Partly, yes; for he is not only a Socialist in theory, but, as Armine says with pathetic pride, he does not content himself with urging others to danger: he is ready to lead them. Nay, from what she lets fall, I fancy it would not surprise her if he

were any day implicated in a dynamite plot on the other side of Europe."

"I should not think," said Egerton, "that Duchesne was that kind of man. He looks to revolution, of course; but I cannot imagine him endorsing assassination."

"Personally I know nothing about him," said M. d'Antignac, "but if he does not himself endorse assassination he is the companion of those who not only endorse it but declare it to be their chosen and approved weapon. It is difficult for any man to disavow the policy of the army in which he has voluntarily enrolled himself. And the utterances of the leaders, as well as the acts of the revolutionary societies all over Europe, are unmistakable on this point. From Mazzini, the idol of 'liberals' and apostle of assassination, to Michael Bakunin, the father of Nihilism, their outspoken teaching is as clear as the acts of their followers have been decisive."

"I am afraid there is no doubt that assassination plays a large part in the revolutionary programme," said Egerton. "But is it not the old story—oppression producing violence?"

"Unfortunately they have not always that excuse. Bakunin, of whom I spoke a moment ago, declared publicly in a speech at Geneva that 'such deeds are justified by the necessity of rooting out from men's minds the habit of respect for the powers that be.' In other words, secret tribunals are to condemn kings and ministers to death for no other crime than that of ruling—or attempting to rule—and in order to break down the last faint tradition of 'the divinity which doth hedge a king.' Has the world, in what are called its darkest ages, ever known anything to equal that? In the broad light of this much-lauded nineteenth century we see Europe dominated by powerful organizations which defy every law of God or man, which proclaim anarchy as their end, terror and bloodshed as their means, and which are already strong enough to dictate the policy of governments."

Egerton did not answer for a moment. Then he said: "It is true. Yet surely there is something to be said for that movement which we call Socialism. Putting aside its objectionable features—assassination, war against religion, and wild theories about property—can it be denied that the grievances of the poor are real and undoubted? And in the face of those grievances we can scarcely blame desperate men for advocating desperate measures."

"In the first place," said D'Antignac, "it is not possible, in considering and judging Socialism, to put aside what you call its

objectionable features; for they are not simply features, but integral parts. Without the denial of religion there could be no such thing as Socialism. And men never stop at denying God: they immediately proceed to make war against him. Now, they can only reach him through the church, which is his visible witness and representative on earth; and so you will find secret societies, wherever they exist, arrayed against Catholicity."

"I have accounted for that," said Egerton, "by the fact that the Catholic Church, embodying the spirit of a past age, is opposed to popular rights."

"It has often been a source of wonder to me," said D'Antignac quietly, "that men of culture like yourself are not ashamed of displaying gross ignorance with regard to what, even from your own point of view, is one of the most important institutions the world has ever known. On every other subject you are careful to be thoroughly informed, to accept no assertion without proof; but when there is question of that church to which you owe every fragment of your civilization you are content to receive the unproved assertions of her enemies and to betray, whenever you speak of her, an ignorance for which a child should blush."

"I am sure I beg pardon," said Egerton, "if I have displayed in any way an offensive ignorance. Nothing was farther from my intention. And I may add that no one admires more than I do the glorious achievements of the Catholic Church in the past. But it seems to me that, however beneficial her influence was at a certain point in the progress of the human race, it is now an outworn force. Having lost her hold on the intellect of the world, she is incapable of leading modern thought."

"My poor friend," said D'Antignac, "your ideas are in sad but not uncommon confusion. Your reasoning seems to be something like this: because modern society three hundred years ago threw off the authority of the church which the Son of God had commanded to teach all nations in his name and witness through all ages to his truth; because it has persistently ever since turned a deaf ear to her admonitions and disregarded her solemn warnings, and because it is now face to face with the logical result of its own principles; because men have transferred the right of revolt from the spiritual to the political sphere, and there is consequently only choice between tyranny and chaos in government; because 'private judgment' has led to universal scepticism, and because the people, deprived of the hope of heaven, are about to rise up and take forcibly the things

of earth, therefore the Catholic Church is an outworn force, unfit to guide the society which owes all that it possesses of good to her."

"I do not think," said Egerton, "that I am stupid enough to have been guilty of such false reasoning as that. But you must admit that the idéas of modern society are wholly opposed to those of the Catholic Church."

"Certainly I admit it, and I add that the result is before you in the evils which afflict that society. The Catholic Church teaches man that he is a being subject to instruction and bound to obey a law which God has revealed; modern thought tells him that he is the supreme judge of truth, and that whatever his finite intelligence cannot apprehend is to be denied and ignored. The Catholic Church inculcates as cardinal virtues obedience and humility; modern thought says that obedience is slavish and humility folly. The Catholic Church echoes for ever the words of her Lord, 'Blessed are ye poor'; modern thought says, 'Blessed are ye rich.' The Catholic Church says that the road to heaven is by self-denial and sacrifice—none other, indeed, than the road of the cross; modern thought affirms that an 'enlightened selfishness' should be the guide of all our actions, that sacrifice is futile, and that the cultivation of our faculties and the amassing of wealth is the true end and aim of life. This is the contrast of ideas. And 'by their fruits ye shall know them.' The condition of the world at present—its higher classes absorbed in the pursuit of gain and the pleasures of life, its lower classes sunk in animalism and despair, governments threatened with revolution and society with dissolution—these things flow directly from a common fountain: denial of the authority of the church, from which in logical sequence has proceeded contempt of *all* authority, both human and divine, infidelity in the spiritual and revolt in the political order."

"And do you think," said Egerton, "that the great problem of labor and capital which underlies Socialism—of the rich, without effort on their own part, growing constantly richer, and the poor, with all their efforts, constantly poorer—flows from the same cause?"

"From what else can it flow?" asked D'Antignac. "Is it not entirely a product of the modern world, of the materialism which has become the gospel of life, and the selfishness which is its law? Echoing a statement which you have accepted without consideration, you said a moment ago that the Catholic Church is opposed to popular rights. Yet where, in the history

of the world, have the people ever found such another friend? She stood between them and the tyranny of their rulers during all the long centuries when civilization was slowly emerging from barbarism; she flung round them her mighty protection and waged continual warfare in their behalf; she raised them from slaves to freemen, and she laid down in her theology that to wring his toil from the laborer for less than its just value is a sin, and to defraud him of his wages is ranked with wilful murder, as one of the sins 'crying to heaven for vengeance'; she blessed those great guilds of the middle ages which secured to the artisan his rights, and of which the trades-unions of our day are merely unworthy imitations; and she framed laws against usury of which the world—helpless to-day before the immense power of capital—is only beginning to realize the wisdom."

There was a pause.

It is difficult for one to whom these truths are so familiar as to be commonplace to understand that to Egerton they were much more novel than the views of Socialism with which he had been lately entertained. Nor let it be imagined from this that he had not the culture which has been claimed for him. Those who know most of modern culture are best able to realize how entirely it regards the history of the world and the claims of the church through a distorted medium—the accumulated prejudice of three centuries of error. The man of letters or of science who has flung aside contemptuously the mutilated creed of Christianity is still as fast bound by an inherited tradition of dislike to Catholicity, is still as childishy ignorant of the true relation of the church to human civilization, as the most narrow-minded adherent of the sects he scorns. The mother of learning is to him a house of bondage for the human intellect; her dogmas, instead of divine truths enlarging the sphere of knowledge, are fetters on speculative thought; her beautiful devotions are idle superstitions; and her influence, to which we owe all progress, is held to be fatal to progress. No one outside the church can escape the contagion of these ideas. They are in the very air; they are iterated and reiterated in every department of literature; and the more a man has yielded himself to the current of his age, the more is he likely to regard with animosity the one steadfast witness of revealed truth.

Egerton was not conscious of entertaining any of this animosity. He would certainly have described himself as entirely unprejudiced—and prejudiced, in a vulgar sense, he certainly was

not ; but that his ideas were those of the " liberal " thinker of his day and generation was sufficiently evidenced by the fact that as he listened to D'Antignac he felt like one whose point of view is shifted so suddenly that familiar things grow unfamiliar, and who may be called upon to readjust all his mental attitudes.

" I see," he said at length, with a smile, " that if Mlle. Duchesne wanted me to have an antidote to her father's teaching she knew very well where to send me for it. Yet what strikes me most is that on several points—especially in your view of modern civilization—you are practically agreed with him."

" Extremes meet in many things," said D'Antignac. " We are, however, exceedingly disagreed in our view of remedies. It has been very well observed that the difference between Socialism and the Gospel is that the latter says to the rich, ' Give ' ; the former says to the poor, ' Take. ' "

" You have certainly given me a great many new ideas and subjects for thought," said Egerton ; " but I fear that I am paying an unconscionable visit, and that I have made you exhaust yourself with so much talking."

" No, I am not exhausted, though I think it very likely that *you* are," said D'Antignac. But as he lay back on his pillows he looked so pale that Egerton, with sudden self-reproach and a glance of apology at Hélène, rose to take leave.

" So far from being exhausted, I have never been more entertained, not even by M. Duchesne," he said, as he drew near the side of the couch. " I only hope that Mlle. d'Antignac will not punish me for my want of consideration by shutting the door in my face when I come again. Taking advantage of your statement that man is ' a being subject to instruction, ' I shall return."

" You will be welcome," said D'Antignac, glancing up with a smile. Then, retaining for a moment the hand which the other gave, he added : " But if you really desire instruction let me beg you to go to Notre Dame on Sunday afternoon to hear an orator as eloquent as the Socialist whom you went to Montmartre to hear."

" With all my heart," said Egerton. " There is nothing to me so attractive as eloquence. Who is this orator ? "

" He is a famous Dominican friar, the Père Monsabré. Go to hear him. And while you listen I will be like the beggar on the pulpit stair and pray that light may enter your mind and grace touch your heart."

CHAPTER X.

As Armine had said to Hélène, the wishes of D'Antignac had such weight with her that it is likely she would have gone to Notre Dame to hear the Père Monsabré, whatever obstacles had been thrown in her path. But, as it chanced, there were none. Her father had been called away suddenly by a telegram from Lyons—one of the mysterious summons which always oppressed the girl with the dread of some unknown catastrophe—and she had nothing to do but set forth in the bright afternoon with Madelon, who had been her *bonne* in the past and was maid and companion in the present, for the Ile de la Cité and the great cathedral of Paris.

They found, when they arrived, a crowd pouring into the church through its vast portals—that is, a number of persons, and those persons chiefly men, which would have formed a crowd elsewhere, but inside the cathedral the immense space of its nave and aisles offered room for an army. Near the sanctuary, however, and especially in the neighborhood of the pulpit, the throng was already dense, a serried mass of entirely masculine forms, for at the entrance of the nave a gendarme on each side waved back all feminine intruders.

Into that charmed space Armine made no effort to enter. She passed with Madelon down one of the aisles, that seem to extend indefinitely before the gaze, with their massive columns and the majestic pointed roof which, having "set itself like a conqueror upon those broad Roman capitals," rises to a height and into an obscurity which the eye can scarcely pierce. Pausing as nearly as possible opposite the pulpit, which is placed against one of the great pillars of the nave, she selected her position and would have kept it had not Madelon begged to make a short visit to the chapel of the Blessed Virgin.

"We need stay but a few minutes; and see! Vespers have not even begun," she whispered.

It was true that Vespers had not begun, and, with the prospect before them of a long time of waiting, Armine consented. They passed around the choir—the outer walls of which are covered with the quaint carvings in alto-rilievo of the principal events in the life of our Lord, begun by Maistre Jehan Roux and finished by Maistre Jehan le Bontelier in the fourteenth century—to the Lady Chapel, which is immediately in the rear of the high altar.

As is generally the case in French churches, it was filled with

a quiet, devout throng, many of whom, in the present instance, were men. Armine knelt down by Madelon on one of the low chairs, and as she did so perceived in front of her a slender, graceful man about whose appearance there was something familiar, though his face was buried in his hands. Presently, however, he lifted it, and then she recognized the Vicomte de Marigny. It was no surprise to her to see him there. She had heard the D'Antignacs speak of him too often not to know a good deal about him, and several times he had been mentioned by her father's friends as one whose ability and ardor might give the friends of freedom trouble. Her father, too, had once said a few words which showed that he regarded him as no common foe. These things had impressed De Marigny's name on her memory even before she saw him; and when she did see him the clear-cut face and dark, earnest eyes stamped themselves quite as ineffaceably.

But soon, like rolling thunder far in the distance, the sound of the great organ reached them, and Armine, rising, touched Madelon, who was dropping the beads of her rosary through her fingers in apparent oblivion of her desire to stay but a few minutes. M. de Marigny rose also at the same instant, and in passing saw Armine. A slight, courteous bow indicated his recognition and brought a faint flush to the pale cheek of the young girl as she acknowledged it; for she had not imagined that he would know her, and, for some reason which she did not explain to herself, she was pleased that he did.

A great disappointment awaited her when she returned to the aisle and attempted to regain her place within hearing distance of the pulpit. The attempt was hopeless. In the interval of her absence the tide of humanity had overflowed from the nave, and a dense throng extended along the aisles as far as there was the least prospect that the preacher's voice could be heard. Armine paused at the end of the choir and stood looking hopelessly at the dark mass of people. The Père Monsabré had not yet appeared in the pulpit, but when he should appear how was she to hear him?

Her disappointment and concern were written so plainly on her face that the Vicomte de Marigny—who, like herself, had been stopped by the crowd—observing it, hesitated an instant, then stepped aside, spoke to an official of the church, and after a moment returned and went up to her.

"Pardon, mademoiselle," he said, "but you are anxious to hear the sermon; is it not so?"

"Yes, M. le Vicomte," she answered, turning to him, surprised by the address, yet with the ease of perfect simplicity. "I am very anxious to hear it. But there seems no hope."

"There is always hope," he answered, smiling. "I can give you a chance to hear it—though I fear not a very good one—by going into one of the galleries, if you care to do so."

"Oh! I should like that," she replied quickly. "You are very kind."

"This way, then," he said, with an air of such grave courtesy that it inspired even Madelon with confidence. They followed him, and the official to whom he had spoken led them up a narrow stone staircase into the gallery that runs under the flying buttresses of the aisles. As they emerged upon this M. de Marigny heard Armine utter a low exclamation. She felt as if a new revelation of the majesty of the great church was borne to her. How solemn were the lines of its noble architecture, how vast its glorious space, when seen from here! The pealing strains of the organ were rolling in waves of mighty harmony through the massive arches, and above its deep thunder rang the choristers' voices, chanting those poetic psalms of the king of Israel which the church has adopted to be her words of praise as long as time shall last. The cathedral itself was like an inspired psalm, eloquent in every line of faith and worship. The golden lights on the great altar shone as distant stars; the clouds of incense mounting upward from the swinging thuribles of the acolytes were a visible expression of the prayer they symbolized; while the play of light and shadow on the great arches and pillars revealed at once their immensity and their repose. It seemed to the girl as if a mighty hand were laid upon her, and, acknowledging its influence in every fibre, she sank upon her knees.

It was the deep spiritual significance underlying these things which thrilled her so powerfully; but it is to be feared that only their outward beauty struck Egerton, who was leaning against one of the pillars of the nave near the pulpit. He was too thoroughly cultivated not to appreciate that beauty fully—not to feel the perfect harmony between the great cathedral and the majestic ritual which it enshrined; not to be conscious that, granting the premises of the Christian faith, just such homage as this man owed to his Creator and Sovereign. But culture, which can open the eyes of sense, is powerless to open the eyes of the spirit. Indeed, by dwelling too much upon external things it is quite possible that it may miss their inner meaning altogether. Yet to one significance of the scene Egerton was not blind. He said

to himself that it was no longer possible for him to think of the Catholic faith as a decaying and outworn force. Was that decaying which could bring together in the capital of modern civilization this vast multitude—not composed of women, nor even chiefly of pious men (though many of the latter were there), but of that class of intellectual men who in these later times have so largely parted with belief? And was that outworn which could put forward such a champion as he whose calm and thoughtful face looked now from the great pulpit of Notre Dame?

This is not the place to give a summary of one of those famous sermons which have so deeply and widely stirred intellectual France and arrested the attention of that keen French mind which is so logical even in its errors, and proved once again how capable of solving all problems of modern thought the science of God's truth is. As we are aware, eloquence was at all times singularly fascinating to Egerton; but this eloquence enchained him, not only from the perfection of its literary form, but because every forcible and clearly-elucidated proposition carried to him a growing sense that here was a system of thought which was at least absolutely harmonious, not only with itself but with all the facts of human existence—a system which to those questions that modern philosophy declares unanswerable is ready with an answer clear, precise, and logical. That answer, as those who belong to the household of faith are aware, does not vary. The message is the same, whatever be the voice of the speaker. But there are some voices which have greater power than others in delivering this message, and under the mighty arches of Notre Dame few have ever sounded more powerful than that to which men all around Egerton were listening now with rapt attention.

At another time he would probably have felt that this attention was as remarkable as the sermon. But now he had no thought to spare for it. For was it not to him directly that the penetrating voice spoke, with its sharp lance of logic and its fire of eloquence? Various and contradictory had been the voices sounding in his ears for many days, diverse indeed the gospels which they preached; but here was one which seemed able to reconcile all that perplexed and make clear what was dark. Something of what he had felt in listening to D'Antignac he felt now in greater degree—like one whose point of view is suddenly shifted, and to whom what has been before meaningless confusion now reveals itself as order and symmetry. But it must be added that in all this his intellectual pleasure was greater

than his spiritual enlightenment. It was his mind alone which received these impressions: his soul had no more share in them than if it had been as non-existent as modern science represents it to be.

Meanwhile the little party of three in the high gallery found that their position was not very favorable for hearing. The voice of the preacher was lost in the great space which intervened between them, only fragments of his sentences coming now and then to the ear. M. de Marigny, having heard him frequently, regretted this less on his own than on Armine's account; and when, after an interval of painfully-strained attention, she looked at him with her eyes of soft gloom, and, smiling faintly, shook her head to indicate that she could not hear, he said in a low tone:

"I am very sorry! Should you like to return below?"

"Oh! no," she answered, with a glance at the closely-packed crowd beneath. "What should I gain by that? I should hear no more, perhaps not so much, and I should miss the sense of freedom which we have here. Why, this"—she looked up at the mighty roof, out into the vast space—"is more glorious than any sermon."

"It is a sermon in stone," he said, smiling. "I am glad that you have some compensation for not hearing the preacher."

"It is a great compensation," she said simply. "I was never here before, and it is wonderful."

Her face was indeed full of the wonder eloquent with admiration, as she stood gazing up at the great flying buttresses, at the multitude of carved forms in which the genius and faith of a past age still live. What the preacher was proclaiming below these massive stones spoke even more eloquently above. It seemed to Armine as if they said: "O faithless and unbelieving generation, while you wander far and near seeking peace in human ideals, we remain to testify to the one Ideal in which all peace abides." Surely it did abide here; and surely it was weary even to think of the feverish world, roaring and struggling so near at hand. A sudden memory came to the girl of the passionate unrest in which her father lived, of his hopes and aspirations, his struggle and revolt. She put her hand to her eyes as if to shut out the vision, and when she took it down it was wet with tears.

They surprised herself, and she dashed them quickly away, but not before M. de Marigny had caught a glimpse of the crystal drops on her lashes and cheek. He was a man of quick in-

tutions as well as of quick sympathy, and an instinct told him what she was feeling. He, too, had thought of the contrast between the social ideal which the preacher was painting in words that seemed almost inspired, and that which the false humanitarianism of the age presents; he was a soldier in the thick of that battle, the sound of which rang in poor Armine's ears, and he knew—none better—how far off was any prospect of peace. But for him, also, the great stones of Notre Dame had a message—a message of courage and faithfulness and hope. "Should we be here," they seemed to ask, "if the men who wrought upon us had not each done his life's work faithfully, patiently, for the honor and glory of God, leaving the completion of the whole to after-time? They labored with eternity in their hearts, so they were content to behold only in vision the stately pile which they were building for the multitudes that were to come after them."

Few more words were exchanged, but Armine caught the flash of comprehension and sympathy in De Marigny's eyes as she brushed away her tears; and when eyes speak, words are unnecessary. They listened quietly to such fragments of the discourse as reached them, and were thrilled by the great rolling burst of the organ which followed. Then when all was over and they had descended Armine paused a moment to thank him again.

"I shall tell M. d'Antignac that I owe it to your kindness that I heard anything of the sermon at all," she said, with one of her most exquisite smiles.

"I fear that the sum of your obligation is very small," he answered, smiling in return, and thinking again what an interesting and touching face this Socialist's daughter had. "I fear you only heard enough to make you desire to hear more."

"That could not be helped," she replied. "I am glad to have heard what I did, and for the loss of the rest there was compensation, you know." Then, bending her head with a gentle graciousness which would not have misbecome a princess, she turned away with Madelon.

This short conversation took place at the foot of the stairs, and as Armine moved away she found that, although the greater part of the crowd had left the building, a number of persons yet remained, and one of these—a gentleman slowly walking toward the choir and looking with interest around him—she met a moment later. It is doubtful whether she would have noticed or recognized him had not his recognition been immediate as soon as his glance fell on her.

"Mlle. Duchesne!" he said quickly, not pausing to think whether he had a right to claim her acquaintance in this manner.

She paused, and there was an instant's indecision in her regard. But before he could speak he saw that she recollected him.

"Ah! M. Egerton," she said. "I am glad to see you here."

"You are very good," he answered. "But do you know why I am here? It is because by your advice I went to see M. d'Antignac, and by his I came to hear the Père Monsabré."

A soft light of pleasure flashed into her face. "I felt sure that he would know what was best for you," she said. "And I hope that you had better success than I in hearing the sermon."

"I heard every word of it," he answered; "and I have never enjoyed a greater intellectual pleasure—not even the pleasure of hearing your father, mademoiselle."

She shrank a little. "That is very different," she said hurriedly. "I—I do not think I would remember that, if I were you." She paused, hesitated an instant, then added, glancing as she spoke toward the distant altar: "Here is order and peace—there chaos and tumult. It seems to me that one need not take long to choose."

Then, giving him no time to reply, she passed on quickly.

CHAPTER XI.

EARLY in the following week Egerton called at the apartment in the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, but was informed by Madelon that M. Duchesne was not at home, and he had not courage or audacity enough to ask for Armine. He was aware that French custom did not permit young ladies to receive visits from young gentlemen; and although he thought it likely that M. Duchesne, who was so anxious to uproot the tyranny of governments, would hardly insist on his daughter being bound by the tyranny of social laws, there was something in Armine herself which made it impossible for him to expect from her any infraction of those laws. He was, therefore, forced to content himself with leaving a card bearing his address, which he hoped might meet the eye of the busy Socialist leader.

It was a few days after this that, remembering the young lady who in Mrs. Bertram's drawing-room had told him that her mo-

ther and herself received on Friday, he went to pay his respects; for they were old friends whom he was conscious of having neglected a little. He found them established in pleasant apartments on the Champs Elysées, and when he was shown into a large white-and-gold *salon* full of many figures and the soft hum of well-bred voices, Laura Dorrance came forward to receive him, saying :

"Why, Mr. Egerton, I thought you had quite forgotten us!"

"Do I prove forgetfulness by coming on the first Friday after you told me it was your day of reception?" he asked.

"We do not expect our special friends to wait for that day," she answered; "and, although you do not deserve for me to say so, we consider you one of our special friends. Mamma has asked about you several times lately. Come and make your peace with her."

She led the way across the room to where, half-buried in a deep chair, sat a delicate-looking lady, whose reception of Egerton was so cordial that no one would have imagined the peace between them to have been ever broken. More gently than her daughter, however, she intimated some surprise at the length of time since she had last seen him, to which, before he could answer, a young lady sitting by replied.

"Mr. Egerton," she said, "has probably been too much occupied in attending Socialist meetings to pay social visits."

The slight satiric ring of the voice was so familiar that at the first sound of it Egerton knew whom he should see, even before he turned to find himself confronting Sibyl Bertram. She was looking particularly handsome in a dress of garnet velvet and a great Gainsborough hat with drooping plumes of the same color. Gainsborough himself might have been glad to paint her in this costume; with its warm lights and rich depths of shadow. Involuntarily Egerton smiled as he met the luminous gray eyes.

"Miss Bertram's kindness, no doubt, prompts her to suggest an excuse for one who has none to offer for himself," he said. "But since I have only attended a single Socialist meeting, I can scarcely claim that it has occupied much of my time."

"Oh!" said Miss Bertram, "I fancied you had by this time attended many."

"In short, joined the Socialist army," he said. "Is that what you would be likely to do in my place?"

"I cannot answer at all for what I might do in your place," she replied. "But at least if you joined what you call the Socialist army you would have a definite aim in life."

"Perhaps I am not so much in want of a definite aim in life as some of my friends are good enough to take for granted," said Egerton, who began to feel that the persistent hostility of this young lady was too unprovoked. "In fact," he went on, turning to Mrs. Dorrance, "it strikes me that there is something positively unhealthy about many of the cries of the present day. We are told to be earnest, to have an aim, to regard life as 'unspeakably solemn,' and many other adjurations of the same kind, which, if they were observed, would certainly tend to make life 'unspeakably solemn'; for the best kind of happiness, that which is simple and natural and not given to constant introspection, would vanish out of it, if we should have a multitude of people striving after visionary ideals, not so much with the hope of reaching them as because the attitude of striving is held to be good. But I think the attitude of repose and satisfaction with things as they are is better."

"It is certainly more comfortable," said Mrs. Dorrance, smiling, while Miss Bertram rose and walked away as if in silent protest against such philosophy; "but I think you must be what is called an epicurean, Mr. Egerton."

"Some people consider me one," said Egerton, looking a little resentfully after the graceful figure in the garnet velvet dress.

Mrs. Dorrance observed the direction of his glance and smiled again. "No doubt Sibyl does," she said; "but there is a French word which describes Sibyl very well. She is *exaltée*—charming, but decidedly *exaltée*."

Egerton felt that he could very easily have described Miss Bertram's manner to him with an English word; but he did not care to talk of her, and began to inquire about Mrs. Dorrance's health, for the sake of which she was staying in Paris. It is a subject which no invalid can resist, and she was still describing her improvement and relating the hopes and fears of her physician when some fresh arrivals created a diversion in Egerton's favor, and he moved away, greeted several acquaintances, and finally approached Miss Dorrance, who was talking to a young lady lately arrived in Paris and full of enthusiasm for the fashions she had been inspecting.

"I have been to most of the famous establishments," she was saying—"to Worth's, Félix's, Pingat's—and I find that one has really no idea of style until one sees it here at the fountain-head."

"Oh! the cut of the great houses is simply indescribable,"

said Miss Dorrance. Then she looked up, caught Egerton's glance, and smiled. "I don't suppose you need to be told, Mr. Egerton," she said, "that to most women Paris simply means a milliner's shop."

"But that is not *all* it means, I imagine," said Egerton.

"I am afraid that it is very nearly all that it means to most of us," answered Miss Dorrance. "Here is Fanny, for example, who has been in Paris ten days and is quite familiar with all the famous shops; let us ask her if she has been to the Louvre."

"Why, of course I have," answered Miss Fanny promptly. "But it is not a place for elegance: one goes there for bargains."

"For bargains!" repeated Egerton in amazement.

"She is speaking of the Magasin du Louvre," said Laura, with a burst of laughter. "O Fanny! what will Mr. Egerton think of you?"

Miss Fanny was in an instant covered with a blush. "I was not thinking," she protested. "Of course I know; but we were talking of shops."

"Yes, it was very unfair to ask the question without making it clear whether the Magasin or the gallery was meant," said Egerton, smiling.

"Well, I must say I am not at all ashamed of thinking more of shops than of galleries," observed Miss Dorrance. "For one thing, they are much more necessary to one's comfort and well-being. Sibyl dragged me to the gallery of the Louvre when I first came, but I have never been there since; and you are at liberty to despise me, if you like, Mr. Egerton!"

"If I were capable of liking to despise you," said Egerton, "such frankness would disarm me. But why not go again? A taste for the fine arts can be cultivated as well as a taste for *chiffons*."

She shook her head. "One does not have to cultivate the last," she said. "It is inherent—in women, at least. There is Sibyl—with all her æstheticism, she is not above it. Otherwise she could not dress so well."

"Miss Bertram certainly dresses very well," said Egerton, as, almost against his will, his eyes turned again toward that young lady.

Yet he had been conscious all the time that she was standing near, talking to Mr. Talford, and it occurred to him that there was something significant in this constantly-recurring conjunction. It was quite true that Mr. Talford had been long ago set

down as "not a marrying man"; but the most incorrigible of such men sometimes find their fate at last, and here was just the fate that would be likely to conquer this man—a brilliant, beautiful woman, who would reflect credit on his taste, and of whom he had said (as Egerton well remembered) that, if she had artifices, they were not of the usual order and therefore not transparent. It was not very exalted praise, but a man must speak according to his nature, and perhaps he shows his nature in nothing more distinctly than in his attitude toward women.

But she! Egerton felt tempted to laugh aloud at the thought that she, who went to the verge of rudeness in condemning his own lack, or what she esteemed to be his lack, of elevated sentiment, should look with favor on the world-worn and cynically *blasé* man that he knew Marmaduke Talford to be. There was something in it which struck him with the force of the keenest humor, yet was not altogether humorous. He began to feel indignant with this *exaltée* young lady, whose professions and practice were so widely at variance. For there could be no doubt of the graciousness with which she treated Talford, and, contrasting it with her manner toward himself, he was moved to resolve that if she attacked him again he would return a Roland for an Oliver.

It seemed as if the opportunity might soon be given him; for, with that instinct which tells people when they are spoken of or looked at, Miss Bertram turned and approached them.

"You are talking of me—confess it!" she said with a smile.

"There is no reason why we should hesitate to confess it," said Miss Dorrance. "We were only speaking good of you: we were saying that you dress very well."

"And you consider that speaking good of *me*?" said the young lady. "I know that 'the apparel oft proclaims the man,' but I confess I did not know before that the dress *is* the woman."

"The dress is the embodiment of the taste of the woman," said Egerton; "and therefore in praising the beauty of your toilette we are really praising your taste, which is part of yourself."

"You are ingenious, Mr. Egerton; I always expect that from you," she said, looking at him with a glance which was not unkindly. "But I am bound to remind you that taste is a marketable commodity, to be bought like everything else in this good city of Paris."

"Not *your* taste, Sibyl," said Miss Dorrance. "Why should you slander yourself by intimating such a thing? I was claim-

ing for you that, despite all your fancies for high art and many other high things, you have a genuine love of *chiffons*, and that your toilettes are the result of that love."

"I flatter myself that my fancy for art has something also to do with my toilettes," said Miss Bertram. "But may I ask what possibly led to such a choice of subject?"

"I think Mr. Egerton's advising me to go to the Louvre and cultivate a taste for pictures led to it," said Miss Dorrance.

"And I only ventured to offer the advice because Miss Dorrance confessed that she had been there but once," said Egerton.

"I think I took her then," said Miss Bertram, "mindful of the difficulty which I experienced, when I first reached Paris, in inducing any one to take me. 'But of course you want to go to the shops first,' my friends would say. And one of them, out of patience with my persistence, at last exclaimed, 'How can you talk of rushing off to see pictures as if you were a Cook's tourist?'"

"I don't suppose you understood the feeling which prompted the remark then," said Mr. Talford, "but no doubt you understand it now."

"I understand it, but I have no sympathy with it," was the reply. "Why should those who have the means and leisure to live in great centres of art, and who are often shamefully indifferent to everything except social trifles, scorn those who, less fortunate than themselves, can only see these great and glorious things by taking advantage of cheap travel? The possession of riches is no more a test of culture than it is of merit."

"Very true," said Mr. Talford; "but many of the possessors of riches do not care more about culture than they do about merit. In possessing money they own the golden talisman which can command everything in the modern world."

"I do not agree with you," said Sibyl, with the ring of scorn in her voice that Egerton had often heard. "The world is mercenary, of course—we all know that—but the things which are best worth having in it money cannot buy. Love and faith, and culture in its true sense—that is, the fine perception of the beautiful—are not to be bought. Then heroism—the rarest and greatest thing on earth—can money buy that?"

She looked very beautiful—her gray eyes opening wide in her energy—and Mr. Talford answered that it would be necessary to define heroism before they could decide whether money could not buy it. The promise of reward would, he thought, in-

duce a man to risk his life in what is called a heroic manner, as well as the hope of glory.

"We are speaking of different things," said Miss Bertram. "You are talking of actions, I am alluding to a quality. Money cannot purchase the heroic soul any more than it can the mind of Plato. I should beg pardon for stating such a self-evident truth, if you had not made the astonishing remark that it can command everything."

"I confess that I was thinking of tangible things," said Mr. Talford, smiling. "Heroism is rather out of my line. I have never seen a hero. I am afraid I should not recognize one if I met him."

"It is very likely," said Sibyl. "It is with that as with everything else, I imagine. Sympathy is necessary for understanding. He who does not believe in heroism will never recognize a hero."

Her incisive tone made Egerton smile. After all, it appeared that Mr. Talford did not fare much better than himself at the hands of this imperious, clear-eyed young lady. It was Miss Dorrance who now interfered in his behalf.

"My dear Sibyl," she said, "tell us how to recognize a hero. Or rather, tell us who *is* a hero. You speak as if you knew many."

"On the contrary," answered Miss Bertram, "I do not know one."

"Then perhaps *you* are deficient in the sympathy which is necessary for understanding," said Laura a little maliciously. "What do you think, Mr. Egerton?"

"I think," replied Egerton, "that heroism is all around us to a greater extent than we know or believe. It often hides under very humble disguises, and we must look closely in order to detect it."

"Probably we must also make a journey to Montmartre," observed Mr. Talford, with an inflection of sarcasm in his voice.

"Oh! no, that is not necessary," answered the other. "No doubt it is to be found in Montmartre—for wherever poverty abounds it exists in the form of endurance and self-sacrifice—but my acquaintance with that faubourg is not sufficient for me to speak with certainty. But I do not think that any of us need go far to look for it. In our own acquaintance we can certainly find at least one example of undoubted heroism."

"In our own acquaintance!" repeated Miss Dorrance and Mr. Talford in a tone of incredulity not very flattering to their

acquaintance. Sibyl Bertram said nothing; she only looked at Egerton with a questioning glance.

"Surely," he said, "you all know, or have heard of, M. d'Antignac?"

There was a moment's pause. Then Laura said: "I know Miss d'Antignac. She came to see mamma—I believe mamma and her mother were old friends—but she said that she very seldom went out, and, although she asked me to go to see her, I have never found time."

"I advise you to find time," said Egerton. "Miss d'Antignac is not only worth knowing herself, but by going to see her you may meet her brother, who is the person of whom I spoke."

"Oh! the man who was shot to pieces in some of the French battles," said Mr. Talford. "Yes, I have heard of him. But if being wounded constitutes a hero, we may find heroes by dozens at the Invalides."

"Being wounded no more constitutes a hero than any other accident," said Egerton. "But to endure a life of absolute helplessness and torturing pain, not only without murmuring but with a patience and cheerfulness nothing less than sublime, and, despite constant suffering and failing strength, to take the keenest interest in the lives and troubles of others, and to spare no effort to help or cheer them—that I call true heroism."

"You are right, Mr. Egerton," said Sibyl Bertram quickly. "It is heroism. And I, too, remember now that I have heard of the D'Antignacs, but I do not know them. I have only heard that they are more French than American, and that Miss d'Antignac does not go out."

"She goes out very little," said Egerton. "Her brother is her first care, and he absorbs most of her time and attention. But she receives her friends. I have been there once or twice on Sunday evening when the rooms were filled."

"But on such occasions I suppose you do not see the brother?"

"On every occasion when I have been there his couch has been the central point of the assembly—the spot where talk was best and wit keenest. But I am told that there are times when he can see no one; and then the doors between his room and Mlle. d'Antignac's *salon* are closed."

"Laura," said Miss Bertram, turning to her friend, "I wish you would go to see Mlle. d'Antignac and take me with you."

"Of course I will," said Laura. "I really would have gone long ago, if I had thought of it. Mr. Egerton, do you think we might present ourselves at the Sunday evening reception?"

"I am sure you might," Egerton replied. "It is altogether informal, and I am certain Mlle. d'Antignac will be very happy to see you. I was there last Sunday evening. Having gone by D'Antignac's advice to Notre Dame to hear the great preacher, Père Monsabré, I went to tell him what I thought of the sermon."

Mr. Talford smiled. "What a singular fellow you are!" he said. "One while you have just been to Montmartre to hear a Socialist orator preach anarchy; then again you go to Notre Dame for a sermon. And which do you prefer—dynamite or infallibility?"

Egerton looked a little annoyed. He would not have minded this raillery in the least if Sibyl Bertram had not been by, but to his fancy her eyes seemed to say, with their accustomed disdain, "When will you find anything in which to believe?"

"Surely," he said a little coldly, "one may enjoy the eloquence of a great orator, whether he be a Socialist in Montmartre or a priest in Notre Dame, without necessarily becoming a convert to his doctrines. For myself, I confess that eloquence is my passion, and I seek it wherever I can find it. That I find it in Notre Dame is not remarkable, for no one can be unaware of the halo of genius that has long surrounded the French pulpit. I heard on Sunday no mere string of moralities, but a strong, masterly discourse dealing with the great social and philosophical problems of our time—a discourse addressed to intellectual men, a multitude of whom listened to it with breathless attention."

"You don't say anything about intellectual women," observed Miss Dorrance.

"For the very good reason that the Père Monsabré does not address his conferences to them," Egerton answered, smiling.

"That is very ungallant of him, then," said the young lady, as she rose to shake hands with some friends who came forward to make their adieux.

Miss Bertram drew back a little from the gay chatter which ensued, and something in her glance made Egerton aware that she wished him to follow. She moved to a table near by and began touching some flowers in a vase as she said, without looking at him:

"I feel that I owe you an apology, Mr. Egerton. I had no right to speak as I did when you first arrived—to imply criticism on your conduct and opinions. I beg your pardon."

"There is no reason why you should," said Egerton, greatly

surprised and forgetful of the irritation he had felt. "What you said was true enough. I have no specially definite aim in life—I am very much of an epicurean."

"It was—it is—no affair of mine," said Sibyl, with an air of uncompromisingly taking herself to task. "Of course it seems to me a pity for a man to spend his time and his talents in mere amusement, intellectual or otherwise; but every one must judge for himself. And I have no right to scorn you, for my own life is no better."

"So she does scorn me!" thought Egerton, half-amused, half-dismayed by this confession. He hesitated for an instant, hardly knowing how to answer. Then, with a strong sense of humor, he said: "Perhaps we are neither of us so contemptible as you imagine, because we are not trying to reform the world. It seems to me that there are a sufficient number of people already engaged in that work—especially since they are not at all agreed in the manner of setting about it."

Miss Bertram smiled. "I have no ambition to reform the world," she said. "But I do not see how one can be indifferent to the great needs of mankind and content to spend one's life in the pursuit of trifles. Yet that is what I am expected to do, and—perhaps I am impatient with you, Mr. Egerton, because I envy you. How free you are! how able to do what you will with your life, your energy, your means! And yet—"

"And yet I do nothing," said Egerton. "It is true; but, in my place, what would *you* do?"

It was a home-question which confused the young lady. She hesitated, blushed; after all, it was easier to criticise, to condemn, than to point out the path of action.

"How can you ask me?" she said at last. "It is not I who can tell. Your opportunities for judging are much better than mine. I have not heard either M. Duchesne or the Père Monsabré."

With that shaft she turned and rejoined the group she had left.

A little later Egerton had taken leave of Mrs. and Miss Dorrance when he was joined by Mr. Talford in the antechamber. "Our roads lie in the same direction, I presume," said that gentleman; and, Egerton assenting, they were soon walking together down the Champs Elysées.

Their talk was idle enough for some time—comments on the equipages, the toilettes, the faces of the crowd which filled the great avenue. But presently Mr. Talford said carelessly:

"Do you still find Miss Bertram incomprehensible?"

"Not incomprehensible, perhaps," replied Egerton, "but decidedly puzzling, as well as very *exaltée*. Mrs. Dorrance suggested the last term, and it suits her exactly. She is very clever; she has read a great deal of modern agnostic literature, and she thinks that we should all be 'up and doing' on some great work for humanity, of the nature of which she is not quite clear."

"I dare say not," remarked the other, with a low laugh.

"It does not, however, prevent her from attending to all the requirements of society and devising very charming toilettes," said Egerton, whose plumes were always ruffled after an encounter with Miss Bertram, "nor yet—" Then he paused abruptly.

"Well?" said Talford, looking up, and the expression of his glance made Egerton aware that he divined what was in his mind.

"You must excuse me," he said, "if I was about to add, nor yet from treating with great consideration you, who, she must be aware, do not pretend to exalted sentiments of any kind."

"It is for that very reason that she treats me with consideration," said Mr. Talford calmly. "The woman of the world recognizes that I am frankly and simply a man of the world. She does not expect exalted sentiments from me. While as for you, my dear fellow, you are neither fish nor flesh—you are neither of the world worldly, nor yet enough of an idealist to please her. Indeed, it is doubtful whether you could gain her approval by going to any lengths of idealism. My experience of women is that if one is foolish enough to attempt to meet their demands, those demands immediately grow with fulfilment. Whereas if one keeps one's own position they adapt themselves to that."

"I have not the least intention of making any attempt to meet Miss Bertram's demands," said Egerton. "Her disapproval is altogether a matter of indifference to me. I cannot truthfully say that, either," he added after a moment; "for sometimes it irritates me and again it amuses me exceedingly. I confess that I have been very much amused by the inconsistency of her position toward you and me."

"There is no inconsistency in it," said Talford. "It is very plain to me. Miss Bertram has in her two women—one fond of visionary things, dreams of heroism, self-sacrifice, ardor, etc.; the other a woman of the world who recognizes what are the matters of real importance in life. It is rather an unusual and quite an attractive combination which the two elements form."

"And if your theory is correct, which of the two do you take to be the strongest?" asked Egerton.

The other looked at him for a moment without replying. Then, "Wait two months and you will not need to ask," he said.

CHAPTER XII.

It was a part of Armine's daily order of existence, when not otherwise occupied, to take a walk with Madelon. Besides the chief end of exercise, there were many objective points for these walks—the markets and shops where necessary business was to be transacted, the churches where of late the girl had liked more and more to go—but among them all there was no more favorite point than the tall house on the Quai Voltaire. Thither she always turned her face with a sense of pleasure; and Madelon never objected to that destination, for it chanced that the wife of the concierge was an old friend with whom she liked to enjoy a comfortable gossip while Armine mounted to the apartment of her friends.

One morning, therefore, as was often the case, they were to be seen leaving the Rue de Rivoli, with its tide of eager life, passing under the massive archway which leads into the Place du Carrousel, crossing that magnificent court which was surrounded and overlooked by the united palaces of the Louvre and the Tuileries until the hand of barbarism fell upon the latter and the destruction which the Commune began the Republic fitly finished, emerging on the beautiful Quai du Louvre, passing over the Pont du Carrousel, and entering the familiar house on the left bank of the river. There, leaving Madelon in the cabinet of the concierge, Armine passed upward and met Mlle. d'Antignac just issuing from her apartment.

"My dear Armine," she exclaimed, "I am glad that you were not two minutes later! You would have found me absent; and the doctor is with Raoul, so you could not have seen *him*. But now I shall take you in"—she opened the door from which she had emerged—"and settle you comfortably in the *salon*."

"But you are going out," said Armine. "You must not let me keep you—"

"I shall not let you keep me," said the other, with her frank smile. "But I shall keep *you* until I return. You will not mind? I shall not be long—I am only going on a little matter of business—and there is a great deal that I want to say to you, so I should like for you to wait, if you can."

"I can wait, if you will not be too long," Armine answered. "And perhaps when the doctor goes I may see M. d'Antignac for a few minutes?"

"Perhaps," said H  l  ne doubtfully. "He is suffering very much this morning; but after the doctor goes you can send Cesco to inquire. If he can see any one he will see you."

She unclosed the *salon* door as she spoke, and ushered Armine into that pleasant room, full of the fragrance of flowers, and with windows open to the brightness of the soft spring day. A table in the middle of the floor was covered with French and English publications, and toward this Mlle. d'Antignac wheeled a deep chair.

"Sit down here," she said, "and amuse yourself for half an hour. I am sure you will not find it difficult to do so."

"I could not find it difficult for much longer than half an hour," Armine replied. "The danger is that I might forget the lapse of time entirely."

"Oh! I shall be back before long," Mlle. d'Antignac answered, "so you need have no fear of that. Make yourself easy in mind and body, and send Cesco to inquire if Raoul can see you, when the doctor leaves."

She went out, closing the door behind her, and a moment later Armine heard the outer door of the apartment also close. All was then quiet. Through the open windows the sounds of the great city came in a softened murmur, suggestive of the fullness of life near at hand, but not loud enough to disturb. The girl sat down in the chair which her friend had drawn forward, and in which her slender figure was almost lost, and leaned back with a pleasant sense of repose. She was warm from her walk, and the coolness and tranquillity were delightful. After a little while she lifted off her hat and pushed back the loose rings of hair from her brow, round which, however, they curled again in damp, picturesque confusion. Then she put out her hand and took a book from the table. It was an English review, and she had just begun to look over the contents when a ring of the door-bell broke the stillness.

The sound startled her for an instant. But a second thought reassured her. No one would be admitted, she felt certain, so she returned to the consideration of the review just as the Italian servant—who had remained with his master ever since the Roman days of the Pontifical Zouave—opened the door of the apartment and confronted a tall, dark gentleman, who said:

"Ah! Cesco, can I see your master this morning?"

"I am sorry, M. le Vicomte, but the doctor is with him now," the man answered. "If you can wait a little, however, no doubt he will see you."

"I will go into the *salon* for a few minutes, then. Is Mlle. d'Antignac at home?"

"No, M. le Vicomte, she has gone out."

"Well, no matter. I will wait, nevertheless. Let M. d'Antignac know, as soon as the doctor leaves, that I am here."

And so it came to pass that, to Armine's surprise and dismay, the door opened and closed behind her, and a step crossed the floor before she conquered her reluctance to rise from the large chair in which she was concealed. But it became necessary to do so when the step approached and paused at the table. She rose, therefore, and, turning, lifted her eyes to the surprised face of the Vicomte de Marigny.

"Mlle. Duchesne!" he exclaimed in a tone of amazement.

"I am sorry that Mlle. d'Antignac has gone out, M. le Vicomte," said Armine with apparent composure, though inwardly she was much discomposed. "And—it is only by an accident that I am here."

The vicomte smiled. "I was aware that my cousin was out," he said, with the exquisite courtesy of manner which had struck the girl before, "but I was not prepared for the pleasure of finding that she had left a substitute. I should beg your pardon for not observing you sooner, mademoiselle, but I really do not think"—with a glance at the high back of the chair from which she had risen—"that I was to blame."

"I am sure that you were not," said Armine, smiling also. "Mlle. d'Antignac asked me to wait for her," she added, "and I was the more willing to do so because I hoped to see M. d'Antignac, perhaps. You are probably aware that the doctor is with him now."

"It is for that reason I have intruded upon you," M. de Marigny answered. "I am waiting until the doctor leaves. But because I have intruded I beg that you will not suffer me to disturb you." He looked at the book in her hand. "You were reading when I entered."

"No," she answered. "I had just opened this to see if there was anything in it which I cared to read."

"It is the *Contemporary Review*, I perceive," he said. "You are familiar with English, then?"

"Sufficiently so to read it easily," she replied; "but I do not

like to speak it. Indeed, I am not fond of speaking any language except my native tongues—French and Italian.”

“They certainly spoil one for all others,” said the vicomte. “But you are fortunate in possessing *two* native tongues. Most of us are forced to be content with one, and to undergo the labor of learning whatever other language we acquire.”

“I should be at a loss to tell whether French or Italian is my native language,” said Armine, “for as long as I can remember I have been as familiar with one as with the other. My mother was an Italian, and I have lived in Italy as much as in France.”

“I fear, then, that France must occupy only a secondary place in your regard,” said M. de Marigny; “for I have myself lived in Italy long enough to appreciate the spell which it exercises, even when one has a country that one places before all others.”

“Yes, I like Italy best,” she said. Then she paused and looked at him with the shadow of a thought in her eyes, which she seemed in doubt whether or not to utter. The absolute unconsciousness of the look struck him exceedingly. He recognized the beauty of the clear, golden eyes, but, moreover, he recognized that gaze as far down in their depths as he would, there was not the faintest trace of coquetry to be perceived. And a Frenchman so naturally expects this trace that its absence always surprises him.

“What is it, mademoiselle?” he asked, answering the look with a smile. “Are you wondering over the fact that even a Frenchman could place France before Italy?”

“No,” she answered. “I was wondering which is best—in its results on the world, I mean—the spirit of patriotism which you express, or the spirit which ignores geographical boundaries and race distinctions to embrace all mankind as brothers.”

This unexpected reply made the vicomte remember what D’Antignac had said of his surprise when he found this girl pondering upon the deep problems of life. She was so young in appearance, and there was so much childlike simplicity in her manner, that he was the more surprised, though there was certainly nothing childlike in the regard of those grave, beautiful eyes.

“That is a question,” he said, “upon which the world is very much divided—though modern opinion leans more to solidarity than to national feeling—but I believe that patriotism is an essential principle in the social order. All mankind are indeed

brothers ; but there are few who will deny that those of our own household have the first claim upon us."

"There are many who deny even that," she said.

"There are unfortunately many who deny everything which human experience proves," he answered. "But," he added, with a remembrance of her father and a desire to avoid wounding her, "no error can maintain any lasting influence unless it holds some fragment of truth ; and the solidarity of mankind, which Socialism teaches, is but an echo of the fraternity of the Christian and the catholicity of the church."

She was silent for a moment, looking down and turning over absently the leaves of the review ; then, glancing up, she said : "So you think there is some good in such teaching?"

"Nay," he said, "you must not misunderstand me. A teaching may be none the less evil in its effects for containing a fragment of truth. To attempt to work out by natural means an ideal which requires a supernatural basis is not only an attempt foredoomed to failure, but also certain to produce unlivable conditions. It is to me," he went on after an instant's pause, "one of the saddest features of our time that so many spirits, full of self-denying ardor and noble zeal for what they believe to be a great end, should waste time, life, energy in pursuit of these vain ideals of human progress, which ultimately can only retard that progress instead of helping it."

Her eyes were now full of quick moisture and grateful light.

"You are right," she said in a low tone ; "it is sad, but I can answer for some of them that they are blind to any other light than that which they follow, and that they are indeed full of self-denying ardor."

As she spoke a slight stir was audible in the antechamber—evidently the doctor going out—and a moment later Cesco opened the door communicating between the *salon* and his master's room.

"M. d'Antignac will see you now, M. le Vicomte," he said, after a slight pause expressive of astonishment at the *tête-à-tête* which he found in progress.

M. de Marigny turned to Armine with an air of deference.

"You will come also, mademoiselle, will you not?" he said.

"For a moment only," she answered.

And so, to D'Antignac's surprise, it was Armine who entered, followed by the vicomte.

"You did not expect to see *me*," she said with a smile, advancing to the side of his couch. "But Mlle. d'Antignac, whom

I met as she was going out, told me that I might beg to see you for a minute after the doctor left. So here I am—just for a minute—to bid you good-day and ask how you are.”

“Not very well,” he said—and, indeed, the wan languor of his appearance answered for him—“but able to see my friends for more than ‘just a minute.’ Ah! Gaston, how goes it with you?”

He held out one hand to the vicomte, while still detaining Armine with the other; and when she made a motion to draw back he said:

“No, I cannot let you run away at once. It has been too long since I have seen you. Sit down for a short while, at least, and tell me something of yourself.”

Armine shook her head. “I should be wasting M. de Marigny’s time as well as your strength,” she said; “and, indeed, I have not anything to tell of myself. Nothing ever happens to me.”

“You can tell me, then, if you have seen again the inquirer after knowledge whom you sent to me, and if any change has come over the spirit of his views.”

“The inquirer after knowledge whom I sent to you?” she repeated with surprise. Then, with a sudden flash of recollection, she added, smiling, “Oh! I remember—you mean the American gentleman, M. Egerton. I had not the presumption to send him to you; but since he spoke of knowing you, I asked him if he had ever heard your opinions on the questions which were interesting him. I am glad if what I said induced him to come to you, and I judge that what *you* said had some effect on him, since I met him in Notre Dame last Sunday afternoon.”

“He went by my recommendation, but I think from intellectual curiosity,” said D’Antignac; “and in the pleasure which he expressed afterwards I heard no echo of anything save intellectual gratification.”

“Intellectual gratification may lead to mental conviction,” said M. de Marigny. “It is quite true that faith is not of the intellect, but the steps toward it must be mental processes.”

“*Credo, quia impossibile est,*” said D’Antignac.

“Yes, I have always thought that the sublimest expression of faith,” said the other. “But a mind must first be led to believe in the possible before it can bow down before that which is impossible—save to God.”

“Egerton is very reasonable,” said D’Antignac. “He is quite willing to acknowledge the possible, but I fear that he will halt long before the impossible. The most careless Catholic has

this great advantage over those whose lot has been cast outside the church: he is able to realize the supernatural, which modern thought grows more and more arrogant in denying."

"And by the aid of that knowledge," said the vicomte, "he is able to understand many things which are a mystery and a stumbling-block to the modern philosopher. You see, *mademoiselle*," he turned to Armine, "I have reached again the point where our conversation ended."

"And it must be the end for me a second time," she answered with a smile. "Yes, I must indeed go," she said in reply to a look from D'Antignac. "But I am sorry—oh! more than sorry—to leave you suffering so much."

"Do not be sorry," he said quietly. "*'Cette vie crucifiée est la vie bienheureuse.'* It was one who suffered as much as I who said that."

"I know well that there are many more unhappy lives than yours," she replied. "Yet one cannot help wishing that you might suffer less."

"Then I might merit less," he said. "Only pray for me that I may be patient."

She murmured a few words in reply, then turned toward the door, which M. de Marigny moved forward to open. It seemed to Armine that he could have done so no more courteously if she had been the daughter of a duke. She thanked him with a glance from her soft eyes as she passed out, returning his salutation with a low "*Bon jour, M. le Vicomte.*"

He closed the door after her and went back to the couch of his friend with rather an abstracted look on his face. It was not a handsome face, but one that had the power to attract attention by its distinction and to hold it by its charm. This charm dwelt chiefly in the dark, deeply-set eyes and in the smile (when it came) of the usually grave lips. It was a thoughtful countenance, with many traces of that ardent and earnest soul which the Breton possesses, and which enables him to preserve a noble type of manhood among the rapidly-degenerating French people.

After a moment D'Antignac spoke:

"*Eh bien*, Gaston," he said. "Of what are you thinking?"

"I was thinking," replied the other, with a slight smile, "that I begin to understand the personal magnetism which Duchesne is said to possess. And I was also thinking that it is a singular chance which has brought me in contact with his daughter this morning, for I came to tell you that I have decided to stand for

Lafour's seat, and I understand that Duchesne is to be sent down to rouse opposition and elect a Republican, if possible."

"But it will hardly be possible?"

"There is no telling. Socialism is a very attractive doctrine, as well as the logical outcome of republicanism, and this man has great powers. Besides, he has reasons for special animosity, and therefore special exertions, against me."

"Against *you*?" said the other with surprise.

"Well, not against me personally, perhaps, but certainly against me as the representative of my family. De Marigny is likely to be an odious name to him, because it is a name which he cannot bear."

"Ah!" said D'Antignac. "How often it is the case that the most passionate advocates of social revolt are those who are under that particular social ban! This fact explains many things about him—the refinement, the mystery, the reputation of gentle or noble blood." He paused a moment, then added: "It is not strange that you have regarded Armine with peculiar interest."

"I think I should have felt that in any case," replied the vicomte. "I never saw a more exquisite face. And either there is something very pathetic in it or my knowledge of her life and its surroundings has made me fancy the expression."

"It exists," said D'Antignac. "No exercise of fancy is needed to imagine it. Poor Armine! she has known none of the sunshine of youth. Her father, I judge, is kind to her, but absolutely absorbed in his work. She has never had any social life; and two things have been always before her—one the weight of hopeless misery which oppresses the vast mass of mankind, the other the spectre of revolution. It is quite possible that she might have become a prophetess of the latter herself but for the light of faith."

"And for the hand which guided her toward that light," said the vicomte.

D'Antignac shook his head. "It is not well to think too much of that," he said. "But tell me your plans for the campaign which is before you."

"I came to talk them over with you," said the other, "since I must leave Paris to-night. But I see that you are suffering very much, and I think it would be better not to trouble you."

"Do you know so little of me as to believe that you could trouble me?" D'Antignac asked. "Ah! no. Go on, tell me everything! One can only rise above pain by abstracting the thoughts from it."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Armine reached home on the day of the visit just recorded she found her father, whom she had supposed far away, seated quietly at work in his *cabinet de travail*. This unexpected appearance did not surprise the girl, who was accustomed to his sudden movements; but she was surprised by the animation of his appearance and manner. Though always an amiable, he was not generally a genial, man; but there was about him now the indefinable expression of one whose spirits are elated, and, after returning her affectionate greeting, he began to observe at once that she looked a little pale.

"You need change, *petite*," he said kindly. "I must take you with me when I go away again. Should you not like to go down into Brittany for a few weeks? The country is charming at this season."

"I should like it of all things," she replied quickly, pleased as much by his thought for her as by the prospect thus opened.

"And can you be ready by to-morrow?" he asked—"for I can delay no longer."

"Oh! that is not difficult," she answered. "I have made too many sudden journeys not to know how to be ready in less time than that. And I have always wished to see Brittany. Have I not heard you say that it is your native country?"

"Only in a certain sense," he answered. "I was born in Marseilles—the fiery cradle of revolution—but I am of Breton race."

"And shall we go to the home of your race?" she asked with eager interest.

He did not answer for an instant. Then he said: "What does it matter? Why should we care for the home of a race when all mankind are our brothers? The noblest spirits are those that forget name and race and social ties for the sake of acknowledging their brotherhood with the poor and the oppressed. I saw such a man the other day—one born to princely rank, but now the friend and companion of *ouvriers*, working not for an order or a family, but for the advancement of humanity."

"Yet," said Armine hesitatingly—for she always dreaded to take issue with her father on this subject—"it seems to me that a man need not disown his ancestors because he devotes his life to what he considers nobler aims than theirs. None the less he owes them gratitude for whatever is illustrious in his name."

"It is a narrow sentiment," said her father, "and we wish to banish whatever is narrow from human life. But I see that, like most women, you have aristocratic proclivities, my little Armine. You would like to belong to what is called an old and noble family, would you not?"

"I do not feel as if I should care very much about it," she answered; "but if I *did* belong to such a family I should be proud of it—of that I am sure."

"And so am I," said her father, smiling. "But now you must run away, for I have much to do."

"Can I not help you?" she asked after an instant's almost imperceptible hesitation.

"Not to-day," he answered. "This is work which I alone can do." Then, as she was withdrawing, he looked up and added: "I had almost forgotten: you must be prepared for a guest this evening. I met the young American who was here with Leroux—you remember him, do you not?—on the boulevard this morning, and asked him to dine with me, since it is my only evening in Paris."

"Why need you have asked him for that reason?" said Armine, whose countenance fell a little.

"Because I wish to see him," answered her father. "He is in a state when a word may decide him; and he would be an accession of value to our ranks. He has enthusiasm, position, and wealth, I am told. It is worth while to go a little out of one's way to gain such a man."

Armine did not answer, but her face wore a disappointed look as she left the room. She had hoped that, being set in the way he should go by D'Antignac and the Père Monsabré, Egerton would dally no more with the fascinations of Socialism; but it seemed, if her father was right, that he was still in a state of mind when "a word might decide him," and that word would certainly be spoken with emphasis by the eloquent voice which had already made so strong an impression upon him. Why her interest should have been great enough for her to be sorry for this may be easily explained. She had, in the first place, inherited from her father the philanthropic spirit, which was none the less strong with her because directed in an opposite channel from his; she had, in the second place, been interested in Egerton because he was a compatriot and friend of the D'Antignacs; and, in the third place, having extended her hand to draw the rash moth from the flame, she was not pleased to see it rush back. Whether she would have been reassured if she had

known how much it was the wish to meet herself which made Egerton seek her father is doubtful. She was entirely devoid of vanity, and she would have been sorry to prove an attraction to draw him under an influence the power of which no one appreciated better than herself.

Egerton, meanwhile, was congratulating himself upon that chance encounter with Duchesne which resulted in the invitation he had eagerly accepted. His interest in Socialism had been revived by contact with the man whose belief in it was so ardent, whose advocacy of it so impassioned; but more than his interest in Socialism was his interest in the daughter with the poetic face who disavowed belief in all that made the aim of her father's life. His wish to see her again was stronger than his desire to hear the creed of revolution expounded, though both existed and agreeably harmonized together. For in calling this gentleman an intellectual sybarite Winter had embodied a juster estimate of his mental character than is often contained in a descriptive phrase. He certainly liked a variety of stimulating and intellectual impressions; but the earnestness to seize, to make his own, to act upon any one, had so far been lacking in him, and there were many persons who believed that it would always be lacking. It was on this ground that the scorn of Sibyl Bertram was in a measure justified, although it remained an open question why she should have manifested such scorn.

What he lacked in definite earnestness, however, Egerton made up in the eagerness with which he received and entertained new impressions. There was something of the imaginative temperament in him, and those only who possess that temperament are aware of the great attraction which intellectual novelty has for it. That this element of novelty made the chief attraction both of Duchesne and Armine to him there can be little doubt, and it was with a sense of interest pleasantly excited that he presented himself at the door of their apartment a few minutes before seven o'clock—the hour designated for dinner.

He found the father and daughter in the *salon*, into which he was shown by Madelon; and the marked distinction of their appearance had never struck him so much as when he entered and saw them thus together, their faces of the same high-bred type, and the easy grace of their manners framed, as it were, by the air of elegance which pervaded the pretty room, notwithstanding the simplicity of its appointments. With all the manner of a man of the world Duchesne received his guest, and Armine, on her part, was not lacking in cordiality. They talked of indif-

ferent subjects for a few moments, when dinner was announced and they went into the adjoining room to such a simple yet perfectly-served repast as one only sees in France. For great dinners, with great expenditure and many courses, are given elsewhere, but here only is the exquisite science of *petits diners* thoroughly understood. At table, also, conversation was for some time altogether commonplace; but a chance remark from Duchesne with regard to his departure the next day made Egerton turn to Armine and say:

"You must see very little of your father, mademoiselle. He arrived only this morning, and he leaves to-morrow, he tells me!"

"I do see very little of him," she answered; "but this time he is going to be very good—he is going to take me with him when he leaves."

"Indeed!" said Egerton. The genuineness of her pleasure was evident, but he felt a little blank, as if a source of interest was about to pass out of his reach. "I hope," he said after an instant's pause, "that you do not go very far or intend to remain away very long."

Armine glanced at her father, conscious that she herself knew very little on those points, and also that he seldom liked his movements to be inquired into; but on the present occasion he answered without hesitation:

"We shall neither go very far nor be gone very long. An election is to take place in Brittany soon to fill a vacant seat in the Chamber. The man who lately filled it belonged to the Right—was a moderate Legitimist and clerical. But the man who offers himself now as a candidate for the seat is an intense Legitimist and a clerical of clericals. He is well known as a leader in his party. No doubt you have heard of him—the Vicomte de Marigny."

Egerton replied that he had heard of him, and he did not notice Armine's sudden start of surprise and attention. Meanwhile her father went on speaking:

"He is a man to be defeated, if by any possible means it can be accomplished. But he has a strong hold upon the people of his district; and although even in Brittany the leaven of new ideas has begun to work, as yet it works slowly."

"And are you going to stand against him?" asked Egerton.

"No," answered the other, with a slight smile. "The part which I have to play in the great onward movement of humanity does not lie within the walls of a legislative assembly. I am one

of those who mould the public opinion which acts on the men who are there."

"Then you go down into Brittany in order to mould this opinion?"

"Exactly. I am sent to aid in bringing about, if possible, the election of the Republican candidate."

"May I ask what kind of a Republican he is?" said Egerton. "I have been long enough in France to discover that there are many kinds."

The other shrugged his shoulders. "*Ma foi*, yes—many kinds indeed. He is, I believe, a moderate Republican of the *bourgeois* type; but there is a fierce logic working behind these men of which they know little. In the end they must do our will or be swept away. It is so with their chief and leader, Gambetta. Oh! yes, revolution was very fine; the rights of the people were noble and great so long as the tide was lifting him toward power; but when he has seized power he would like for the revolution to subside and be quiet. But the revolution has other ends in view than to make M. Gambetta dictator of France—ay, or to make the fortune of any other man." He lifted his head; a flash of fire was in his dark eyes. "The day for such men has passed," he said; "the day for the people has dawned."

"Has it?" said Egerton a little sceptically. Yet as he spoke he felt himself stirred by the magnetic influence of this man's strong conviction, and he forgot to look at Armine, who sat quite silent with downcast eyes. "Yet the ends for which you and those who feel with you are working seem as far off as ever."

"As far off as ever!" repeated Duchesne. He smiled with a mingling of amusement and scorn. "Forgive me, *mon ami*, but how little you and those like you know of anything save the surface of affairs! Why, the triumph of *all* our ends is merely a question of time—and, it may be, of very short time. Because you see the old tyrannies standing, the old abuses in progress, do you think the friends of humanity are idle? Nay, we work without ceasing; nor is our work in vain. From end to end of Europe our organizations extend, and when the signal strikes, when the moment for uprising comes, it will not be France alone which will renew the days of '93. *That* was but a prelude of the great drama of revolution finally accomplishing its results which we shall see when the Volga answers to the Seine, and from the Baltic to the Mediterranean an emancipated Europe will rise and shake off its fetters for ever."

Unconsciously Egerton felt himself shudder a little. The man's voice, with its intense earnestness, its ring of positive prophecy, conjured before him those days of '93 of which the self-believing prophet spoke, and he seemed to see the blood-red cloud of revolution rising which was to whelm the civilization of more than a thousand years.

"I know," he said after a moment's pause, "that Europe is honeycombed with your societies, but surely a century of revolution has proved that, after all, it is no easy thing to overturn an established government."

"So far from that, it has proved just the reverse—it has proved that nothing is easier than to overturn any government, if the people are but united in what they desire. To secure this union of purpose is the work to which we give our lives, and wherever there is a chance for an opening wedge there we enter it. Such a chance is this for which I am now going down into Brittany. The people there have long pinned their faith to the nobles and the *curés*, but it is time to let them hear the sound of the new gospels—the dignity and rights of man, of the necessity of revolt instead of the duty of submission."

"But," said Egerton, "I confess that I fail to see what you will gain if you elect a man with whom you have little more in common than you have with the Vicomte de Marigny."

"Do you know so little of fundamental principles and the life that is in them as to think that?" said Duchesne. "Why, the most timid and opportune Republican has, in common with us, belief in the equality of men's rights and the supremacy of the popular will. That is the basis of all republicanism, whether marred by halting and compromise, or carried out logically to its inevitable conclusion that it is a crime to withhold from man any one of his rights. From that basis the Vicomte de Marigny totally dissents. He does not acknowledge the rights of man and he does not recognize the supreme authority of the people. An absolutist in politics and a bigot in religion, there can be no quarter between him and us. We may respect such an opponent, but we cannot spare him."

"Do you think it possible to defeat him?" asked Egerton. "He is a man of power and influence, and in his own hereditary home—"

"The triumph will be to defeat him there," said the other, with a quick light in his face—the light of animation and elation which had puzzled Armine. "They begin to realize that the middle ages have passed, these nobles, when their personal

prestige wanes even under the walls of their châteaux, and the descendants of their vassals rise up against them."

"And so, mademoiselle," said Egerton, turning to Armine, "you are going to take part in a political battle?"

As she looked at him he saw that all the pleasure which had been in her eyes when she spoke of leaving Paris with her father had died out of them, and instead there was the pained and wistful expression which he had seen more than once before.

"No, monsieur," she answered quietly. "It does not follow that I shall take part in the battle because I go with my father."

"I fear that Armine has but a half-heart for the cause," said her father. "A man's foes are of his own household, it is said; but thou, *petite*," he added kindly, seeing that his daughter looked distressed, "thou art only, like a child and a woman, fond of clinging to the dreams of the past."

"The question is," said Egerton, "what are dreams and what are realities? It is rather hard to determine. *Your* hopes, for example—are they not dreams to the majority of the world?"

"That is a question yet to be answered," said Duchesne. "But however much of dreams they may seem to those who are only able to recognize accomplished facts, be sure they will yet prove realities of the most stern and undeniable character."

Egerton had himself little doubt of it, so he did not challenge the assertion. And in this vein the conversation continued until they rose from table. Coffee was served in the *salon*, and it was then that Duchesne apologized to his guest for the necessity of attending a revolutionary meeting in the Salle Rivoli. "Knowing that I must attend it," he said, "I should not have asked you to dine with us this evening had it not been my only evening in Paris."

"Pray do not let any consideration of me trouble you," said Egerton. "I am very happy to have had the pleasure of dining with you, even though I must resign your society for the evening to the patriots of the Salle Rivoli." He paused a moment, tempted to say that he would spend half an hour longer with Mlle. Duchesne, if he might be permitted. But in French society such a request would be inadmissible, and the air of this *salon* was too much that of French society for him to venture on it. So he asked instead if he might be allowed to accompany Duchesne to the meeting.

The latter hesitated a little before replying. Then he said: "If you will you may do so; but I am bound to warn you that

you will hear a great deal of tumultuous nonsense. A meeting like this, full of unfledged and unpractical enthusiasts, is very different from the grave councils in which the real business of the revolution is transacted."

"Yet what is that but government, and a very irresponsible government, too?" said Egerton. "As far as I can understand your councils demand implicit obedience, yet are accountable to no one. Could a king of the most absolute type do more?"

It was quite evident that this home-thrust from so promising a disciple disconcerted Duchesne for an instant. Then he said:

"If we demand obedience it is only from those who willingly give it for the sake of the end which we have in view; and if our councils sit in secret and render an account to no one, it is only until our end—the great end of freedom for all—is gained. But," he added, glancing at the *pendule* on the mantel, "I see that I am nearly due in the Salle Rivoli, so we have no time to discuss the subject now. But if you care to accompany me, and if I may detain you until I change my coat—"

Egerton professed, sincerely enough, his readiness to be detained for any length of time, and while Duchesne disappeared he turned to Armine.

"I hope, mademoiselle," he said quickly, "that you did not misunderstand my question at dinner; that you did not think I imagined you were about to take part in the political battle of which your father spoke, or that I could have meant to bring forward the points of difference between you? I spoke, as one too often does, lightly, heedlessly."

"It was very natural. Believe me I did not misunderstand you," Armine answered, regarding him quietly with her deep, soft eyes. "You did not mean to bring forward the difference, but it is always there, and my father feels it as well as I. But he is kind, he says little. Ah! monsieur," she broke off abruptly, "it seems to you, perhaps, interesting and exciting to hear of plots and plans and revolutions, of preparations for the whirlwind which is to destroy everything; but do you ever think what that whirlwind will be when it comes? And can you conceive what it is to live ever with the sound of its terror in one's ears?" She extended her hand suddenly with one of the dramatic gestures which are so natural to the southern races. "You play, you palter with it now," she said, "but God have mercy on you when it breaks!"

Her tone, her look were like a grasp of passionate earnestness laid upon one who is trifling with momentous issues; and while

Egerton was still silent with surprise Duchesne entered, saying :

“ Pardon, *mon ami*, but I am ready now.”

CHAPTER XIV.

WITH that deep note of warning still ringing in his ears, Egerton, however, felt less inclined for the meeting of the Salle Rivoli. His impressionable nature had been thrown out of accord with it, and when he found himself in the street, instead of listening to the utterances of Duchesne, he was bringing again before his mental vision Armine's voice and glance and gesture. What recollection was it that had been roused in that moment? Of what had she reminded him as she stood for an instant, her hand extended with that majestic motion, while her eyes were full of solemn light?

It was characteristic of the man that the answering of this question seemed to him just then of paramount importance, and that he felt Duchesne's conversation rather distracting than interesting. Consequently they had not proceeded very far when he suddenly paused, pleaded a forgotten engagement, and begged to be excused from attending the meeting.

Duchesne was probably not sorry, for it is notorious that the scenes which the Salle Rivoli witnesses do not incline one to hope for much in the matter of order from these vociferous and turbulent reformers of the world. It is quite certain that if the revolutionary army was altogether, or even chiefly, composed of such material society would have little to fear from it. But behind these noisy recruits is the trained and tremendous power of the secret organizations before which governments stand paralyzed and helpless. Yet these governments learn no wisdom. Everywhere the cry of persecution is raised against the only power which is able to cope with the evils that afflict the world; everywhere the church is confronted with the pagan idea of state supremacy, and everywhere souls are wrested from her, to become victims of the shallow theories of the materialist in religion and the anarchist in politics. Surely it is true as of old, “ Whom the gods would destroy they first deprive of reason.” Is the society which has revolted against God, and which replies to the solemn warnings of his vicar with scoffing jeers, indeed doomed to utter destruction? It may be so, for the movement which began by denying the authority of the church has long since culminated in denying Him who said: “ And whosoever

shall fall on this stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder."

It must not be supposed that thoughts like these were in Egerton's mind as he parted from his companion and walked down the long avenue. It was an artistic, not a moral, impression which he was striving to grasp, and suddenly it came to him ; suddenly he almost cried aloud, "Eureka !" In the church of San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome hangs a picture famous throughout the world—Guercino's beautiful St. Margaret. No one who has seen it can ever forget the majestic air of inspired fearlessness and command with which the saint—

"Mild Margarete that was God's maide,
Maide Margarete, that was so meeke and milde"—

lifts the crucifix in one hand, while with the other extended she seems to awe back the dragon, whose hideous head and fearful jaws are powerless to daunt her. It was of this exquisite picture that Armine's attitude and expression reminded Egerton, though in hers there had been warning rather than command. But the general resemblance of face and gesture was striking, and he said to himself that, "meeke and milde" as this girl appeared, he had seen a flash in her which proved that she, too, might face danger and death with the same lofty courage as the maiden of Antioch who has been so long enrolled on the list of God's saints.

"But if she should ever be forced to put herself into an attitude of antagonism to her father it will go hard with her," Egerton thought, with a sense of painful pity. At that moment he felt that D'Antignac had done ill to shatter her belief in her father's ideals. Surely it would have been better for her to go through life dreaming of a glorified humanity than to have ever before her eyes the red spectre of revolution, and to hear constantly the enunciation of a faith which she could not share. It was hard on both sides—for Duchesne was evidently aware that his daughter's sympathy was withheld from him—and might become much harder as events developed. Even now it was plain that Armine shrank from accompanying her father on the errand which was taking him into Brittany. Egerton could not forget how the pleasure had died out of her eyes when she heard what that errand was. "Poor girl ! how she must long for peace," he thought. And then he remembered—it was not the first time the association had arisen in his mind—another girl who chafed against the peace which encompassed her, and who would have

asked nothing better than to be able to fling herself into such a life as that which surrounded Armine. "And she would make a very fine priestess of revolt, too!" he said to himself, with a laugh which would not have pleased Miss Bertram had she heard it.

It was natural enough that after all this he should have dreamed of Armine that night—dreamed of her more than once as St. Margaret holding aloft her crucifix before the dragon—or that his first thought in waking should have been of her; for whatever idea has colored our dreams in sleep is quite certain to be with us when we wake. And as it chanced to be one of the mornings of the flower-market of the Madeleine, the perfumes which filled his chamber presently suggested the thought of sending some flowers to her. He was by no means sure how far French custom permitted such an attention from a mere acquaintance; but he said to himself that it did not very much matter, since any infraction of custom on his part would be regarded merely as the pardonable ignorance of a foreigner. And it would be a graceful acknowledgment of hospitality, a graceful mode of saying farewell. Having thus decided that there was no reason why he should not give himself the pleasure he desired, he rose, made his toilet, and went out.

It is a charming sight which the broad esplanade of the Madeleine presents on these spring mornings, when Paris is so fresh, so radiant, so like a city swept and garnished, and for a short space the country seems to have brought all its floral treasures and poured them out here in lavish wealth. The sunshine falls on great heaps of blossoms, the air is full of fragrance and the hum of cheerful voices, as people gather like bees around the flowers, then go away laden with them.

As Egerton crossed the street toward this animated scene his glance was attracted by a slender figure pausing just in front of him, and which, before he could reach it, moved on with hands filled with lilies-of-the-valley. With a somewhat crest-fallen sense of being, as it were, anticipated, he recognized Armine, and for a moment looked after her, uncertain whether or not to execute the intention which had brought him out. She was, as usual, attended by her maid; and while he looked they turned into the enclosure surrounding the Madeleine and ascended the great steps of its portico.

Egerton at once decided to follow. A church was free to every one, and he might exchange a few words with Armine as she came out. What particular words he wished to exchange, or

why he should have wished to exchange any at all, he did not ask himself. It was not his custom to inquire the end of any fancy which occurred to him, nor, indeed, to trouble himself whether it had an end at all or not. Just now it was sufficient that his interest was excited by Armine, that she was a new type of character, which he liked to study; beyond that he saw no necessity for going. He turned, therefore, as she had done, through the open iron gates, mounted the steps of the portico, and entered the church.

The first impression which it made upon him was of a size which he had never realized before, having always heretofore seen it when crowded at High Mass and Vespers. Now it was comparatively empty—vast, cool, and dim. A priest was saying Mass in one of the chapels, and before it a number of figures were kneeling. Egerton drew near and sat down on a chair behind these figures. For some time he did not remember or look for Armine. It was the first time he had ever seen a Low Mass, and he was absorbed in watching.

Strange to say, it impressed him more than High Mass had ever done. Then the number of ceremonies, the music, the lights, the crowd, had distracted his attention from the great central fact. But now he seemed to realize what it meant—for those who believed. The slow, majestic movements of the priest, the reverence of the server, and the silence of the worshippers, all seemed in harmony with the idea of offering to God a supreme act of worship. Unlike many of those who are brought up outside the church, Egerton was at least able to conceive this idea, to understand that what he saw before him was that which the whole world, for more than a thousand years, had revered as the stupendous Sacrifice of the New Law. So much, at least, culture had done for him. It had emancipated him from the narrow ignorance which is the parent of narrower prejudice in those who are the unhappy inheritors of error.

It was not until the Mass was half over that he perceived Armine, who was kneeling at one side, somewhat in shadow. But as soon as he saw her he was struck by the expression of her face. The pathetic look of sadness which had been on the brow and in the eyes whenever he had seen it before was now replaced by a spiritual peace which changed the whole aspect of the countenance. Her hands were clasped, her eyes were fastened on the altar, the lilies he had seen were lying with her prayer-book on the chair in front of her—it was an exquisite picture that she made in the soft shadow out of which her sensitive

face looked, with beautiful, clear eyes full of repose. Egerton could not but think that it was a strange revelation after all that he had been thinking of her since they parted the night before. Waking and sleeping he had seen her before him in an attitude of combat, resistance, warning; and now what cloistered nun could have worn a face of greater serenity?

In the midst of these reflections he suddenly waked to a consciousness that the Mass had ended, the priest was leaving the altar, and some of the congregation were rising. He rose also and left the church, having decided to waylay Armine in the portico. He had time, before she appeared, to admire the picture at his feet—the Rue Royale leading to the Place de la Concorde with its fountains flashing in the morning sunlight, the soft mist rising from the river, the front of the Palais du Corps Legislatif in the distance across the Seine: a famous space, a space which has witnessed some of the most terrible events of history, yet giving as little sign of it now as the sea gives of the wrecks over which it has closed!

The soft swing of the closing church-door made him turn as Armine emerged, the lilies in her hand, the same look of repose on her face. But the look changed and she gave a slight start of surprise as she saw who it was that came toward her with easy assurance, uncovering as he came.

“Good-morning, mademoiselle,” he said. “I am happy to have another glimpse of you before you leave Paris.”

“Good-morning, M. Egerton,” answered Armine, pausing and regarding him with her grave, gentle eyes. “You are very good, but this is not a place or a time when I should have expected to see *you*.”

“I imagine not,” he said. “But you know—or rather you do not know—that I live in this neighborhood, and therefore it is very natural that I should be here. I confess”—as she still regarded him somewhat incredulously—“that I am not in the habit of frequenting the Madeleine so early in the day; but the force of example is accountable for my presence this morning. I saw you going to church, and I followed.”

“You can do nothing better than go to church, monsieur,” she said a little coldly, “but I fail to understand why my example should have had sufficient force to draw you there.”

“I see that I must make an entire confession,” he replied, smiling. “I was waked by the odors from the flower-market, and it occurred to me that I might take the liberty of sending you some flowers. With that intention I came out, to find you

engaged in anticipating me"—he glanced at the lilies in her hand. "So then it was that your example led me into the church."

"Where I hope that you found something to repay you for your kind intentions with regard to the flowers," she said, now smiling also.

"Yes, I was repaid," he answered. He hesitated an instant, then went on: "A face of which I had been thinking all night with almost painful sympathy rose on me like the morning-star, full of peace," he said.

He saw that she understood him at once, and, though she looked a little surprised, she was plainly not offended. There was an instant's pause, then in a low tone she said: "Why should you have thought of it with painful sympathy?"

"Because it gave me a revelation of how issues which I have treated lightly enough mean pain and perplexity to others," he answered; "and because I realized the hardship that a young and gracious life should be robbed of its natural sunshine by the dark shadow of misery and revolt—"

She interrupted him with a slight gesture. "There was no need of pity for *that*," she said. "Those, I think, are happiest who do not try to ignore the misery which leads to revolt, but who are able to do something—however little, so that it be in the right way—to lessen it."

"Ah! in the right way," he said. "But that is the point, that makes the sadness—that people with the same end in view are so hopelessly disagreed about the means of reaching that end."

Something of shadow crept again into her eyes as she answered: "Yes, it is sad, but there is a thought which can give comfort, if we only dwell upon it often enough and long enough. God knows all, and God orders all. Out of the wildest tumult he can bring peace, if it be his will. Why, then, should we disquiet ourselves? All issues are in his hand."

"You have faith like that?" said Egerton, struck more by the penetrating tone of her voice, by the light which came into her face, than by the words.

"Sometimes I have," she answered. "It is a light which comes and goes—that is my own fault, no doubt—but this morning it was with me when I woke. I had gone to sleep almost overpowered by the sense of hopeless weight; but when I woke a voice seemed to say, 'What do you know of the end? Be patient and trust God.' Was not that a morning-star of peace, monsieur? And all things are easy when we can trust God."

It was a simple message, yet at that moment Egerton seemed to realize the deep wisdom which was contained in it. Surely, yes, all things must be easy to those who can trust with faith like this. It was no wonder that so great a change had come over the face which he had seen filled with pain and foreboding the night before. It was the difference between night and morning.

But at this point Armine remembered herself and made a movement to go. "You are very kind to have thought of me—in that way," she said. "Believe me, I am grateful. And now I must bid you adieu. We leave Paris this afternoon."

"I know, and I am sorry," he said. "But I shall hope to see you when you return. I trust that may be soon."

"So do I," she answered, but from her tone he knew that she was thinking of nothing less than of seeing him on that return.

She moved on as she spoke, and Egerton crossed the portico and descended the steps by her side, saying as he did so: "I hope you will permit me to fulfil the original intention for which I came out, and send you some flowers? It is true that you have already provided yourself, but if you are a lover of them you must feel that one can never have too many."

"You are very kind," she answered, "but because I am a lover of them I think one can have too many, if one must leave them to fade. And that is what I should be forced to do to-day. These lilies I got for M. d'Antignac. He likes them, and I am going to see him this morning, to bid him adieu. It is a word I must repeat to you," she added, pausing as they emerged from the gate and holding out her hand.

Egerton, understanding that it was dismissal as well as farewell, accepted it at once, made his best wishes for her journey, and stepped back while she walked away with Madelon. For a moment he stood still, watching the slender, graceful figure. Then, conscious that this attitude was likely to attract attention, he turned quickly, to meet the half-surprised, half-amused face of Mr. Talford.

"Good-morning, my dear Egerton," said that gentleman suavely. "Let me congratulate you upon having discovered the virtue and excellence of early rising. It is true that to the world in general the morning is pretty well advanced; but I believe that you are seldom seen abroad before noon."

"That depends entirely upon circumstances," replied Egerton. "But I was not aware that, as a general rule, *you* were inclined to the virtue and excellence of early rising."

"I may echo your words and reply that my habits in that respect entirely depend upon circumstances," answered the other. "But the circumstances are not usually of a devout nature, nor am I often rewarded by such a pair of eyes as those which were smiling on you a moment ago."

"Those eyes," said Egerton a little stiffly, "belong to a young lady for whom I have the highest esteem and most profound respect. It was by the merest accident I met her in the Madeleine; but since she is leaving Paris with her father to-day, I embraced the opportunity to make my adieux."

"Ah!" said Talford, elevating his eyebrows a little. He did not, however, permit himself to make any further remark, but merely inquired, after an instant's pause, if Egerton had breakfasted.

The latter replied in the negative. "I came out in haste," he said. "I did not stop, but my coffee is waiting for me, I am sure. And uncommonly good coffee Marcel makes. Come and join me, will you not?"

"I have taken mine," replied Talford. "I did not come out in haste, but very much at my leisure; owing, probably, to the fact that the eyes which were the cause of my coming are behind and not before me. Though, indeed," he added reflectively, "I hardly think that I could be excited by the most beautiful eyes to the point of going out on an empty stomach. Such enthusiasm is part of the happy privilege of youth."

"It is certainly," said Egerton with a laugh, "part of *my* happy privilege not to think much of my stomach."

"Ah! you will change all that as you grow older," said the other. "Then you will begin to understand that the stomach is a much more important organ than the heart—though of course at twenty-five one does not think so. One can get on very well—in fact, with great advantage in point of comfort—without a heart. But a good stomach is a first essential for enjoying life. So I advise you, my dear fellow, not to take liberties with yours."

"You are very good," said Egerton, "but I think that you had better come and give me the benefit of your advice over a cup of Marcel's coffee, when I can apologize at my leisure for not keeping my engagement with you last night."

"You owe me an apology," said Talford tranquilly, "since I should not need to be here this morning if you had kept your appointment. I was on my way to your apartment, when to my surprise I saw you descending the steps of the Madeleine. My

object was—nay, is—to inquire if you are inclined to join me in accompanying my cousin Laura Dorrance and Miss Bertram to the Bois this morning.”

“On horseback, I presume?”

“Of course. They have been anxious to ride for some time, and I believe that all preliminaries with regard to habits and horses are now happily settled. I was directed by Laura to ask you to join the party, and I thought I should have an opportunity of doing so last night. But since you failed to enter an appearance I was obliged to come forth in search of you or else run the risk of disappointing the ladies.”

“I am sorry you have had the trouble,” said Egerton. “I should not have broken the engagement last night, only, if you remember, it was not positive. I shall be very happy to go. And now you will come in while I send for my horse?”

“No, thanks. I must return to my own apartment, where I shall expect you in the course of an hour.” He nodded and turned away, then looked back to add, “We shall take our *déjeuner* with Miss Bertram.”

CHAPTER XV.

A BRIGHT spring morning is always certain to find the alleys of the Bois de Boulogne thronged with equestrians, and the morning when Egerton joined the party consisting of Miss Bertram, Miss Dorrance, and an elderly gentleman who, being a distant connection and great friend of the Bertrams, acted as chaperon, was no exception to the rule. The leafy bridle-roads which cross the avenues and plunge into the green depths of the great pleasure-ground were as full of animated movement as Rotten Row, with the difference that in Rotten Row all the animation is visible at a glance, while here it is only revealed in part. But this difference is in favor of the Bois; for who does not know the beauty of a sun-and-shadow-flecked forest vista, and the charming fancies which horsemen and horsewomen passing out of sight or advancing along such a vista suggest? All the world of romance seems to open—romance for ever associated with youth and beauty and strength, and here surrounded by glancing sunlight and dewy leaves, and soft mists lying afar over famous heights.

The party of people who entered the Bois on this particular morning were pleasantly exhilarated by the brightness and beauty around them. Egerton was at first a little puzzled to imagine

why he should have been asked to join what was already a *partie carrée*, but he was soon enlightened by the manner in which Miss Dorrance appropriated him.

"In my opinion it was all nonsense asking old Colonel Faire to accompany us," she confided to him when the gentleman mentioned was in advance, riding with Miss Bertram and Talford. "Mamma would never have thought of such a thing. She sees no reason why I should not go about with Cousin Marmaduke here as I would in America; and I see no reason either. But Mrs. Bertram is full of foreign ideas—I suppose because she has lived abroad so much—and she insisted that Sibyl must not go without a chaperon. There was no lady eligible for the position whom we could ask, so we finally compromised on this old gentleman. He is very nice, and a great friend of the Bertrams, you know; but I did not care to have him bestowed upon *me* as an escort—and that was, of course, what would have come to pass—so I insisted on your being asked to join us."

"You are very kind indeed," said Egerton. "I am immensely flattered to learn that you think my society preferable to that of Colonel Faire."

"Now, that is one thing about you that I don't like," said the young lady frankly—"that sarcastic way of talking. You are evidently *not* flattered about something. Yet I am at a loss to know what it is, for I consider it decidedly a compliment to have asked you to join us, without comparing your society to Colonel Faire's at all."

"I am ashamed that you should think I meant to be sarcastic," said Egerton, unable to explain the slight disappointment which had prompted the tone of his speech. "It proves that there was something amiss in my expression, though not in my intention. For I *am* sincerely flattered, I assure you, and delighted to be able to rescue you from Colonel Faire."

"Oh! I have no special objection to Colonel Faire," she replied. "But he is tiresome—as old men mostly are—and I did not see why I should bear the burden of propitiating the proprieties when I care nothing about them in this particular form, while Cousin Duke would of course devote himself to Sibyl."

"His devotion, then, has come to be a matter of course?" said Egerton.

"It seems to me that jumps at the eyes," said the young lady, with a shrug as Gallic as her idiom. "I really think he is in earnest—matrimonially in earnest—at last."

"Ah!" said Egerton. "And do you think that Miss Bertram is matrimonially in earnest also?"

"That is hard to tell," answered Miss Dorrance. "Sibyl is *difficile*. She always has been. People think her capricious, but it really is not caprice so much as that men—for we are talking of men—disappoint her. I have heard her say that she likes them as long as she can fancy something heroic about them; but she very soon discovers that there is nothing heroic at all."

"Then we are to suppose that she is in the stage of fancying something heroic about Mr. Talford," said Egerton, with the inflection of sarcasm in his tone to which his companion objected. "It does infinite credit to her powers of imagination."

Miss Dorrance shook her head. "I don't think," she said, "that even with her powers of imagination—and they are considerable—she can fancy anything heroic about Cousin Duke. He is very nice, and I have always been very fond of him, but he makes no pretensions of that kind."

"No one could possibly accuse him of it," said Egerton, with the same inflection of tone.

"He would tell you," pursued Miss Dorrance, "that in consequence there is no room for disappointment. And he may be right. Certainly Sibyl appears to like his society very well. One must see that."

"Yes," Egerton assented, "one must see that." Then he paused, not caring to add that such a liking seemed to him the keenest of satires on Miss Bertram's high ideals and pretensions. The old sense of injury and indignation rose in his mind as he looked at the graceful figure riding in front, at the fine, spirited face showing in profile as Sibyl turned toward one or the other of her escorts. "No doubt Talford is right," he said to himself. "She has two women in her, and the idealist will go to the wall before the woman of the world. But it is impossible not to be amused by her inconsistency."

He flattered himself that this was the predominant feeling with him—that he was amused by her inconsistency—when, the ride over, they were assembled at breakfast in the pretty apartment with windows overlooking the green foliage of the Parc Monceaux. Mrs. Bertram received them with her usual gentle, well-bred kindness; the *déjeuner* to which they sat down was admirably arranged and served, and something of the freshness of the outer world seemed to linger about them, as it does about people who have just come in from the most delightful of all forms of exercise; while not only its freshness but its brightness

also was reflected in Sibyl's face, as, in her perfect, close-fitting habit, but with her hat laid aside, she sat at table talking and laughing lightly.

"Yes," she said in answer to some remark of Colonel Faire on her animation, "I am always exhilarated when on horseback, and for some time afterward. Like the lover in Browning's poem, I think that I could ride, ride, for ever ride without tiring. It is the most perfect of all physical enjoyments. Climbing a mountain is very fine. To sit upon an Alp as on a throne is a glorious sensation; but one has to undergo much labor and fatigue to accomplish that end, while in riding the beginning as well as the end is delightful. When I am on horseback I feel in charity with all the world."

"That is certainly delightful," said Miss Dorrance. "It is a pity that it has not the same effect on every one. Here is Mr. Egerton, for example, who has seemed very much *out* of charity with all the world this morning."

"What, Egerton, after beginning the morning in such an exemplary manner!" said Talford, with a smile. "I should have expected better things."

"Did he begin the morning in a specially exemplary manner?" said Miss Dorrance before Egerton could reply. "Then perhaps that accounts for the matter. I have always observed that people are apt to be severe on their neighbors when they feel themselves particularly virtuous."

"I am sorry if I have seemed to be severe on my neighbors," said Egerton, "but it was certainly not in the least because I felt particularly virtuous. I presume that what Talford alludes to is that he saw me emerge from the Madeleine this morning. But whether it is exemplary to go to church or not is, I believe, determined by the motive that takes one there."

"Yours, then, we are to suppose, was not devotion," said Miss Bertram.

Talford looked at him with another smile. "There is devotion religious and devotion personal. Eh, Egerton?" he said.

"Undoubtedly," answered Egerton quietly; "but since neither of the two actuated me, I cannot possibly claim either as a motive."

Miss Dorrance's eyes said, "What *did* actuate you, then?" But as good-breeding forbids the asking of direct questions, she was forced to restrain this one to her eyes, so that consequently it was unanswered.

Miss Bertram meanwhile said: "At all events, it was a plea-

sant manner of beginning the day. Catholic churches are to me most attractive when there is no one in them."

At this Mr. Talford laughed. "I doubt if Egerton would find them so," he said. "It was certainly not the case with the Madeleine this morning."

"So far from that," said Egerton, "there were a number of persons in it. But I know what you mean," he added, turning to Miss Bertram; "and although a priest was saying Mass while I was there, I had the feeling of which you speak—a sense as of an infinite charm of quiet, of repose, of devotion."

"It is the feeling which induces so many Protestants to say that they feel so much more devout in Catholic churches than in their own," said Miss Bertram. "One can hardly define it, but every one who is at all impressionable must be conscious of it."

"That is a saving clause," said Mr. Talford, "for I was about to remark that I have never felt it. But then it is almost unnecessary to say that I am not impressionable."

"Quite unnecessary," replied Miss Bertram. "We are quite sure that 'a primrose on the river's brim' is a yellow primrose to you, and nothing more."

"What more could it be?" he asked, lifting his eyebrows a little.

"Without attempting to answer that question," said Colonel Faire, "one may be quite sure that there is such a thing as seeing too much in a primrose, as well as many other things. Now, about that 'infinite charm of repose and devotion in Catholic churches,' do you think that it is not simply an effect of the beauty which is so large a part of that system; and when impressionable Protestants feel more devout there than in their own churches, are they not yielding simply to a pleasure of the senses?"

Sibyl looked at him and smiled. "That is an argument which I have heard before," she said; "but it seems to me that those who use it forget that the senses are the only mediums by which we can receive any impressions. And if we receive great truths through our hearing, why should not devotion be roused through our sight? If certain forms of beauty are capable of putting us in a reverential frame of mind, a wise system would certainly employ them. Architecture, painting, sculpture, music—I am sure that the religion which neglects to use any one of these in its appeal to human nature neglects a very powerful aid. But in saying this," she added quickly, before any one could

“speak, “don’t think that I mean to admit that it is the beauty of Catholic churches altogether, or even chiefly, which produces the effect of which we are talking. I have felt it in humble chapels that had no beauty, and I have missed it in great cathedrals which are no longer Catholic. Where is there in the world, for instance, a more beautiful building than Westminster Abbey? Yet who can enter it and not feel that it is like a body from which the soul has fled?”

“My dear Sibyl!” said Mrs. Bertram in a slightly shocked tone of remonstrance, “how can you talk so? I am sure, Westminster Abbey is one of the most interesting churches in the world.”

Sibyl smiled. “Yes, mamma,” she said. “But about this that we are talking of: I maintain that it is peculiar to Catholic churches, and that it cannot be the effect of beauty alone.”

Egerton regarded her curiously. Consciously or unconsciously, it seemed always her fate to be surprising him. Certainly he would not have expected to find in her this perception of what he had so lately felt himself—the mysterious influence of that Presence which dwells in Catholic churches, and which is manifest even to many of those who have not faith—but it was very plain that she possessed it, and plain also that he was very far from understanding her singular character.

Meanwhile Talford said: “It strikes me that an argument about something which half of us never felt, and which the other half cannot define, is something like discussing the nature of the soul, when we are not at all sure that we have a soul. Let me turn the conversation to a more mundane subject by asking—” he turned to Mrs. Bertram—“if you have seen the new play at the Français yet.”

“No,” she answered. “We have not seen it for the simple reason that it has not been possible to obtain places. Sibyl and I tried twice, but found every seat engaged for so many nights ahead that we decided to wait until the first rush to see it is over.”

“And I wait with more philosophy,” said Miss Bertram, “because I judge, from the amount of space which the journals give to descriptions of the actresses’ toilettes, that it is a poor play.”

“I hope you will soon decide that point for yourself,” said Mr. Talford. “I have not yet seen it either; but I have been fortunate enough to secure a box for to-night, which I trust Mrs. Bertram will allow me to place at her service.”

"You are very kind," said Mrs. Bertram graciously. "It will be very pleasant to go to the Français to-night, since it is the evening for the *monde*. Then if Laura will accompany us—"

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Bertram," said Laura. "I shall be delighted. I am very anxious to see the play, and I told Cousin Duke so at least three days ago."

"In that case no doubt it is to your desire that we owe his kind exertion," replied Mrs. Bertram, "and I am very glad to be able to be your chaperon."

Miss Dorrance glanced at Egerton and elevated her eyebrows in a manner expressive of her scepticism on this point; but she restrained her tongue, and a few minutes later they rose from table.

It was when they returned to the *salon* that Egerton found his first opportunity to exchange a few words with Miss Bertram. She had moved to one of the open windows, and was standing there—a tall, straight, graceful figure—pointing out the pretty lights and shades in the park to Colonel Faire, when he joined her.

After a little desultory talk the elder gentleman stepped back to answer a question of Mrs. Bertram, and the two were left *tête-à-tête* just as Sibyl was saying that in the spring there was no pleasanter place of residence in the world than Paris. "And we have tried most places—that is, most well-known places," she added.

"I, too, like Paris," said Egerton. "Apart from those things which lie merely on the surface, its attractions are manifold, and I should make it my home, if I had anything to do here. But that is the trouble. Existence without an object must end in weariness."

"You have found that out, then?" she said.

"I never doubted it," he answered. "Yet it is difficult, in cold blood, without any compelling taste for any pursuit in particular, to decide what to do. The need to make money is the great spur to effort with most people; but I have money enough for my wants, so what is to be my spur?"

"The desire to benefit humanity," answered Miss Bertram. "What better could you want?"

"I might readily be excused for wanting a better," he said, "but whether I shall find it or not is another question. I don't think humanity is able to inspire one with much besides contempt—good-natured or bad-natured, according to one's disposition—

when regarded in the mass. Yet I should like to be able to do something toward relieving its mountain-load of misery, and that is what has drawn me a little toward Socialism. But Socialism recognizes only one way of relieving this misery—that is, by seizing the property of those who possess any. Now, perhaps it is because I belong to the latter class that my sense of *meum and tuum* protests.”

Despite herself Sibyl laughed. “I fancy,” she said, “that you have only been amusing yourself with Socialism, as with most other things.”

“No,” he answered. “I have been seriously attracted by it, and again as seriously repelled. Among its leaders undoubtedly there is a sufficient ardor and spirit of self-sacrifice to revolutionize the world. But then I confess that I do not regard with lively satisfaction the idea of a world in revolution.”

“Apropos of leaders, have you seen lately the one who interested you so much?”

“Duchesne? Yes; I dined with him last night. And—although I did not choose to say so to Talford—it was Mlle. Duchesne to whom I was speaking at the door of the Madeleine when he saw me this morning.”

Miss Bertram’s gray eyes opened wide in surprise.

“What! Does she go to church, and do you go there to meet her?” she asked.

Egerton laughed. “She goes to church—yes,” he answered. “But as for my going there to meet her—well, in candor I must confess that it was her example which induced me to enter the Madeleine this morning. But I had no intention of meeting, nor indeed hope of speaking to, her, though I did manage to exchange a few words with her on the doorstep.”

“She is a very interesting person, I think you said.”

“She is an exceedingly interesting person,” returned he. “I never see her without wishing that I had an opportunity to know her better than I do.”

“And do you not know her well?”

“Very far from it. Measured by the rules which govern acquaintance, ours is of the slightest—I may say the very slightest—description. Yet each time that I have seen her there has been something which gave me a glimpse of her inner self such as is not common in conventional intercourse.” He paused a moment, then added: “I think that you would like her.”

“Do you?” said Miss Bertram a little doubtfully. “I am not

sure of it. What interests you might not interest me at all, you know. But the father, now—I should no doubt be very much interested in him, and I wish that I could see him.”

“I should be happy to make an effort to gratify you,” said Egerton, “but he is a bird of passage—much occupied with revolutionary schemes in many places; and he leaves Paris to-day to superintend an election in Brittany. His daughter goes with him—somewhat reluctantly, I think, because of the business in which he is engaged.”

“I remember that you said she does not approve his schemes. It is strange that a girl—and a young girl, did you not say?—should evince so much independence of thought—or is it subjection of thought? Perhaps, like many women, having been brought up religiously, she is unable to emancipate herself.”

“To the best of my knowledge she was not brought up religiously,” said Egerton. “Her mother died early, and she was left altogether to her father’s influence and training.”

“Then how is it possible that she does not feel enthusiasm for his hopes?”

“She has probably seen and known too much of what those hopes mean. It is very different to look at a thing from afar, with a poetic glamour around it, and to draw near and see it face to face. Mlle. Duchesne has seen revolution face to face more than once—in fact, she sees it, in anticipation, all the time.”

“On consideration,” said Sibyl, with an air of reflection, “I think that I should like to know her—if it were possible. There must be something interesting about one who has had such a life. But I suppose it is not possible?”

“Most things are possible, if one has the will to bring them about,” said Egerton. “There is one simple means by which you can know Mlle. Duchesne, if you care to do so—she is a great friend of the D’Antignacs.”

“Indeed! So besides being interesting themselves, they have the additional merit of possessing interesting friends! I shall certainly insist on Laura’s fulfilling her promise of taking me to see them.”

“What promise is it that Laura is to fulfil?” asked that young lady, hearing her own name and drawing near.

“The promise of taking Miss Bertram to see the D’Antignacs,” said Egerton. “I thought you had surely fulfilled it some time ago.”

“I don’t think we have either of us found the necessary time,” said Miss Dorrance. “But you need not be so reproachful,

Mr. Egerton. I assure you that I mean to go, and to take Sibyl."

"And I mean to be taken," said Miss Bertram; "for what I have heard of M. d'Antignac—not only from you but from others—makes me wish very much to know him."

"I hope that you will know him," said Egerton. "I am sure that you will then find that there is such a thing as heroism in the world, independent of any fancies with regard to it."

She looked at him with a quick glance.

"Do you mean *my* fancies?" she asked. "I confess that I have begun to doubt whether it has any existence independent of them."

"There are times, I suppose, when we are all inclined to doubt it," he answered. "But it fares ill with us, in that as in most else, if faith dies into scepticism and we accept the lower for want of belief in the higher."

CHAPTER XVI.

PERHAPS those last words—which Egerton felt afterwards to be rather presumptuous in what they implied—made an impression on Miss Bertram, for the next time he called at the D'Antignacs' he heard that she had been there with Miss Dorrance.

"And I do not know when I have been so much struck by any one," said Hélène d'Antignac. "What a brilliant, handsome, intellectual face she has! I confess that I am very fond of clever people; and one has only to look at Miss Bertram to see that she is very clever."

"Yes, she is certainly very clever," said Egerton—"too clever for her own good, I am afraid."

"How is her good threatened by her cleverness?" asked Mlle. d'Antignac, smiling.

"Oh! in many ways," answered Egerton rather vaguely. "You will soon find out what they are, if you know her, as I hope you will; for I think your friendship would be of infinite benefit to her."

"I am afraid I do not feel within myself the power to be of infinite benefit to any one," said Hélène simply; "but I should like to know this girl well, for I am quite sure that she is worth knowing. The cultivation of the acquaintance will depend on herself, however. I cannot pretend to pay visits. Those who wish to see me must come to me. My life is here."

"Did Miss Bertram see M. d'Antignac?" asked Egerton.

"No. Miss Dorrance said something about desiring to see him; but he was not well enough to be disturbed that day. If they come again—as I asked them to do—they may see him then."

"I think they will come—at least I think Miss Bertram will come," said Egerton. "She desires to see M. d'Antignac very much."

"Raoul will like her," said Hélène. "She is a person who is sure to interest him. He likes brilliant people, even if they are a little erratic."

"So you have discovered that Miss Bertram is a little erratic," said Egerton, smiling.

"I have not discovered, I have only suspected, it," answered Mlle. d'Antignac. "Brilliant people often are. But I am sure she is none the less attractive for that."

"She is very attractive," said Egerton, discreetly holding his peace with regard to certain drawbacks to this attractiveness.

When he came again it was on Sunday evening, and he was not surprised to find Miss Bertram sitting by D'Antignac's couch. He had felt quite sure that she would return, and the expression of her countenance—an expression compounded of gentleness, compassion, and vivid interest—told him how deeply she was impressed, even before he found an opportunity to speak to her. Indeed, it chanced that just then two or three intellectual men were gathered around D'Antignac, and their talk was different from that which Miss Bertram was in the habit of hearing in the social circle which she chiefly frequented. One slight man, lean as a greyhound and dark as an Arab, was a professor of the Sorbonne; another was a journalist of note, the author of a political *brochure* of which just then all Paris was talking; while a third was an Englishman with rugged face and leonine mane, whose name was Godwin, who occupied an apartment above the D'Antignacs' and was one of their warmest friends. This man had been talking when Egerton came up.

"Oh! I grant that, as a nation, logic is your strong point," he was saying to one of the Frenchmen, "but it seems more likely to prove your destruction than your salvation. Taking certain principles, such as liberty of thought and the rights of man, you carry them out to a conclusion which cuts every belief from under your feet and reduces life to chaos. Whereas the Englishman, strong in common sense and recognizing the multitude of mysteries that surround him in life, accepts with philosophy an illogical position for the sake of its practical advantages."

The professor shrugged his shoulders. "The *mot de l'enigme* is in the last sentence," he said. "Your countrymen, monsieur, would do much more than accept an illogical position for the sake of its practical advantages, especially since you will not deny that, generally speaking, their sense of logic is not keen."

"Generally speaking it is very obtuse," said Godwin, "and so much the better for them. What has the fine logic of the French ever done but lead them into atheism, revolution, and anarchy?"

"And does it not occur to you," said the other, "that the temper of mind which seeks truth, and truth only, even if it leads to what you call atheism, to revolution, and to anarchy, is better than that which contentedly compromises with error for the sake of the practical advantage of present peace and prosperity?"

"No," answered Godwin, "I cannot admit that it is better until you prove that your atheism, revolution, and anarchy have been of benefit, or are likely to be of benefit, to the human race."

"It appears to me," said the other, "that it is late in the day even to make a question of that."

"But it is a question—in fact, the supreme question—of our time," said Godwin. "And I, for one, deny that you have accomplished any good in comparison with the evils inflicted upon France, for example—evils which every man must see and acknowledge, and for which the panacea is revolution, still revolution; so that in the end this once great Frank nation will sink lower and lower in the scale of nations until no man can predict her degree of final abasement."

His words struck home, and there was a moment's silence; for no Frenchman of any sagacity, however much of a revolutionary *doctrinaire* he may be, can close his eyes to the waning influence of France abroad and to her shrinking population, her failing credit, and her moral decadence at home.

It was D'Antignac's low but clear voice which broke the silence:

"You are right enough, Godwin. The evils are tremendous—almost beyond calculation—which have been brought upon France by revolutionary principles. But I should not blame the logic of the people for that. It is only by following principles out to their logical conclusions that we can truly judge what they are. Now, in France alone has this test been applied to ideas which in a more or less covert form are working in every nation of Europe. Here alone were men who did not shrink

from carrying out to their utmost consequences the principles of the great religious revolt of the sixteenth century ; and if the French Revolution—which was the ultimate outcome and expression of those principles—startled the world, and especially England, into a reaction, you have surely French logic to thank for that.”

“ Oh ! yes,” said Godwin, with a laugh, “ I grant that we have that much to thank it for. But the result for France was not so fortunate as for us.”

“ The final result for France we do not yet know,” said D’Antignac. “ How far she is to wander, how deep she is to fall, we cannot tell. The false light of human reason, the false ideal of human liberty which she is following, will certainly lead her into misfortune and humiliation greater, perhaps, than any she has known yet ; but the depth of her fall may be the measure of the height to which she will rise when she, who was the eldest daughter of the church, the first among barbarous nations to recognize and embrace the truth, shall again lift her eyes to that truth and be the first, perhaps, to return to that faith which so many of her noblest children have never forsaken. That is what the fine sense of logic which you deride may do for her. It is not logic which has been her bane, but the false principles which she accepted as a basis for thought. Given just principles, and there is no intellect in the world so lucid and so luminous as the French in its demonstration of truth. The compromises with error, the building up of high-sounding premises on unstable foundations, which are the characteristics of English thought, are unknown to the French mind. It either embraces truth in its entirety or it does not shrink from the utmost consequences of negation.”

Those who had never heard D’Antignac talk on some subject which deeply moved him could form little idea of how his eyes would glow, his whole face light up with the energy of his feeling. As Sibyl Bertram looked at him now she thought that she had never before realized how clearly the spirit might reveal itself through its fleshly covering.

“ *Bien dit, mon ami,*” said the professor. “ On that point we agree. The French mind does *not* shrink from the utmost consequences of negation. And therein lies our strength and our best hope for the future. The present may be dark and uncertain ; but it is by following the pure light of reason that we may at last solve our problems, rather than by returning to the twilight of that superstition which you call faith. For France,

which has ever been in the van of human thought, is not likely to retrace her way. It is true that she was the first among barbarous nations to accept Christianity, but it was then a step into the light. It would now be a step into darkness."

"That," said D'Antignac, "is a favorite assertion of your school of thought—or rather of opinion, for I do not honestly believe that there is much thought in the matter—but assertions without proof, as you must be aware, carry little weight. And it is difficult for you to prove that Christianity is synonymous with darkness, when every ray of the light of your boasted civilization directly or indirectly emanates from it. There are many travesties of history, but none which can absolutely blind men to the fact that modern Europe, with its whole civil and moral order, is the creation of the church, and of the church alone. She rescued from barbarism and built up into nations the people who now turn against her and wrest to their own destruction the knowledge which she taught; and it does not require a prophet to tell that in proportion as her influence diminishes and the traditional hold of the morality which she taught grows less the relapse of these people into essential paganism is certain."

"We may see it in progress before our eyes," said the journalist. "What else is the tyranny of the state, the exaltation of material ends, the tampering with rights of property, the abrogation of the marriage-tie—for the law of divorce practically amounts to that? There can be no doubt that we are more and more approaching the ideal of a pagan state, with a corresponding pagan corruption of morals."

It was at this moment that D'Antignac glanced toward Sibyl, and, meeting the bright intelligence of her eyes, he said, with his exquisite smile:

"I fear, Miss Bertram, that you think us sad pessimists. Have you ever reflected much on these subjects?"

"I have reflected on them—not very much, perhaps, nor very wisely—but enough to be exceedingly interested in all that you have said," she answered. "You would not think so from my appearance, probably, but such discussions interest me more than anything else."

"It is from your appearance that I have arrived at the conclusion that they interest you decidedly," he said, still smiling. "Why should you do yourself so much injustice as to imagine otherwise?"

"Oh!" said she, smiling too, "I know that I look like a young lady who thinks only of amusements and toilettes and con-

quests. At least Mr. Egerton"—with a slight glance toward that gentleman—"has more than once told me so."

"I?" said Egerton, who had drawn near in time to hear this speech. "Of all unjust charges which you have ever made against me—and I must be permitted to declare that they have been many—this is the most unjust! When did I ever intimate in the remotest manner that your appearance so far belied you?"

"I thought I remembered something of the kind," said she indifferently, "but it does not matter. I only hope M. d'Antignac will believe that though I may look as if my soul was in *chiffons*, I have a few thoughts to spare for higher things."

D'Antignac regarded her with a penetrating yet kindly expression in his dark, clear eyes.

"I should never suspect you of putting your soul in *chiffons*," he said. "And I am quite sure that you have many thoughts to spare for higher things."

"But to think even of the higher things with profit one must know how and what to think," she said quickly. "And that is difficult. For instance, what you have just been talking of—the tendencies of modern life and modern thought. There are so many conflicting opinions that it is hard to tell what is and what is not for the benefit of humanity."

"We may be quite sure of one thing," he answered: "that nothing is for the benefit of humanity which ignores or denies man's dignity as an immortal being owing his first and highest duty to God. That is the necessary condition for morality, public and private; and although there is a benevolence widely preached at present which substitutes man's duty to his fellows for his duty to God, it is like endeavoring to maintain a toppling house after destroying its foundation."

Egerton, who knew how attractive the idea of benevolence thus described was to Miss Bertram, could not refrain from a glance to see how she liked this chance shot. She met his eyes, smiled, and said to D'Antignac:

"Mr. Egerton is triumphing over me. He knows that I am a great advocate and admirer of what you condemn—that is, the teaching which substitutes the pressing and immediate duty of helping one's fellow-creatures for a narrow and selfish personal religion."

"It is a very attractive teaching to generous and—forgive me if I add—uninstructed people," said D'Antignac. "In reality it is the revolt of such people against a religion which you de-

scribe very accurately as narrow, selfish, and personal. Such was and is the religion of those who in their beginning proclaimed 'faith without works' as their battle-cry, who seized and robbed every charitable foundation, who contradicted the words in which our Lord laid down the rule of perfection when he bade him who desired to be perfect to sell all that he had and *give to the poor*, and who absolutely obliterated from the minds of Christian people the knowledge of the corporal works of mercy, as well as the sense of the obligation to practise them. The result was that order of material prosperity which has crushed and ground down the poor, until on every side they are rising with cries of revolt which are like sounds of doom in the ears of those who have so long oppressed them. We know this movement as Socialism"—it was now Miss Bertram's turn to glance at Egerton—"and it is one direct consequence of the denial of the necessity of good works. Another consequence is the outcry against the selfishness of religion. It is chiefly made by people who only know religion in the narrow form of which I have spoken; but if you remind them that modern humanitarianism has nothing to show in practical result in comparison with the grand work of Catholic charity, they reply that this work is vitiated by the motive of being done for God rather than solely for humanity. They are not aware that all other duties are included in the supreme duty of serving God, as all the light of our material world emanates from the sun. Remove that great central light, and what artificial substitute can take its place? So good works undertaken without the motive of divine charity are but rays of artificial light, transient and unsatisfactory."

"But surely," said Miss Bertram, "you will allow that one may love one's fellow-man without loving God?"

"After a manner—yes," said D'Antignac; "but not as if the central sun were in its place. You realize what the old cavalier meant in the noble lines:

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honor more."

Can you not, therefore, realize that a man must love his fellow-beings better for loving God supremely?"

Sibyl shook her head. "I am afraid that I know very little of what is meant by loving God," she said.

"Modern philosophers have certainly made him unknown, if not 'unknowable,' to the generation they have educated," said D'Antignac. "But for all that he is to be known by all who

choose to seek him. And knowing him"—the pale face lighted as with a flame—"none can fail to love him."

They were simple words, yet, winged as they were straight from the ardent soul, it was to Sibyl Bertram as if they revealed a world of which she knew nothing, and before which she stood in awe and wonder. Suffering, sacrifice—what meaning could such words have to souls which were filled with the love that seemed suddenly to shine on her like a light from the suffering-stamped face of this man?

Just then there was the stir of new arrivals, and two or three people—evidently intimate friends of D'Antignac—came forward to his couch. Sibyl drew back, and in doing so found herself beside Egerton, to whom she said:

"I have you to thank for being here, Mr. Egerton. I should never have thought of coming but for your advice."

"I hope," he said, "that you do not regret having followed it."

"Do you know me so little as to imagine that possible? How could I regret finding myself in the most rarefied atmosphere I have ever breathed? I am inhaling it with delight."

"I thought that it was an atmosphere which would please you," he said, with a smile.

"If you really thought so you paid me a compliment which I appreciate. What an intellectual pleasure it is to listen to talk such as I have heard on all sides since I have been here! And as for M. d'Antignac—well, I have never before seen any one in the least like him; but if you hear of my sitting all the time literally as well as metaphorically at his feet you need not be surprised."

Egerton laughed. "I cannot imagine your sitting at the feet of any one, either literally or metaphorically," he said.

"That is because you do not know much about me," answered the young lady calmly. "I have a great capacity for hero-worship, but I have never up to this time found the hero on whom to expend it. But pray tell me who is the lady talking to M. d'Antignac now? She has the air of a *grande dame*."

"She is a *grande dame*—Mme. la Comtesse de St. Arnaud, sister of the Vicomte de Marigny and a cousin of the D'Antignacs. I have seen her here before."

"She has a striking air of distinction, and a charm of appearance without being at all beautiful."

"She is very like her brother. Perhaps if you saw him you might find another hero to your liking. He is D'Antignac's closest friend, and, I presume, a man after his own heart."

"He seems to have a great variety of very different friends, this M. d'Antignac," said Miss Bertram. "By the way, did you not promise that I should meet your Socialist if I came here?"

"Duchesne? Good Heaven, no! That would be a little too much even for D'Antignac's tolerance. I only said you might meet his daughter, but not on an evening when they receive generally. I am quite sure that Mlle. Duchesne has too much sense for that. The Comtesse de St. Arnaud, for example, might be surprised to meet the daughter of the man who is at this moment most vigorously opposing her brother's election."

"Really, this is very charming!" said Miss Bertram. "It is my ideal of a *salon*, where people of the most different tastes and opinions can meet on neutral ground, and where there is a central mind of intelligence high enough and sympathy wide enough to attract them all."

"There is certainly that here," said Egerton, looking at the man who lay on his pillows with interest so keen and charity so gentle imprinted on every line of his face.

"You called him a hero," said Miss Bertram, following the direction of his eyes, "but do you know that he looks to me more like a saint?"

Egerton might have answered that saintliness is the highest form and perfection of heroism; but he was prevented from making any answer at all by the appearance of Miss Dorrance, who from some point suddenly swept down upon her friend.

"Have you had enough of it, Sibyl?" she asked. "If so, I think we might take leave. Oh! how do you do, Mr. Egerton? You see here we are! Sibyl would give me no peace until I came. And now I suppose that she will be wanting to come all the time, for I think she has at last found an atmosphere sufficiently exalted to suit her. I confess that it is a little too exalted for me. I like something more sublunary; but no doubt that is owing to my unfortunate want of taste. I do think M. d'Antignac perfectly charming, however, and if I could fancy myself falling in love with anybody I believe I should fall in love with him."

Miss Bertram drew her straight, dark brows together in a frown.

"It seems to me," she said, "that there are some people who should be exempt from the association of such an idea."

"Do you think it a very terrible idea?" said Miss Dorrance, opening her eyes. "I thought it flattering—at least I meant it

that way. What do you think, Mr. Egerton? Is it not a compliment to say that one is inclined to fall in love with a person?"

"I should certainly consider it a compliment if you were to say that you were inclined to fall in love with me," replied Egerton.

"Of course you would, and you would be a monster of ingratitude if you considered it otherwise. But Sibyl—well, Sibyl is so *exaltée* that one never knows how she will look upon anything."

"I look upon the use of French terms in English conversation as very objectionable, especially when they are used to stigmatize one unjustly," said Sibyl, with a smile. "If you are anxious to go, Laura, I am quite ready; but I must thank you again, Mr. Egerton, for having put me in the way of coming here."

CHAPTER XVII.

SIBYL BERTRAM was right in saying that she had a capacity for hero-worship which only needed the appearance of the hero in order to declare itself; but she had also too fine a sense of the essential characteristics of heroism to be deceived by any ordinary counterfeit. And since heroes do not abound in life, especially in the conventional order of life in which her lot was cast, she had fallen into a state of scepticism by no means extraordinary in a nature so ideal in its tendencies and so fastidious in its tastes.

And to this mood Mr. Talford played the part of a well-bred Mephistopheles. His quiet but absolute disbelief in anything exalted; his positive conviction that selfishness, pure and simple, dictated the conduct of every human being who was not a madman; his easy cynicism and creed of worldly materialism, which he made no attempt to conceal, and which a wide experience of life seemed to justify—these things were not without their effect upon Sibyl, though it was an effect which Egerton failed to understand. She was not inconsistently tolerating this cynical man of the world while amusing herself with certain high ideals by which other people were uncompromisingly tried, but was rather deliberately asking herself whether this cynicism was not, after all, the true philosophy of life, and her ideals mere baseless dreams.

For it must be remembered that the enthusiasm of which she was capable, the aspirations which she felt toward noble ends

had absolutely nothing to feed upon. The life of a young lady in commonplace society affords perhaps as little scope for anything of an exalted nature as can possibly be imagined, unless the great force of religion enters this life and by its wondrous alchemy transmutes the performance of ordinary duties into great deeds. But in the society in which Sibyl moved this force had no existence. It is a society which keeps up a bowing acquaintance with God, and which goes to church (in a new toilette) on Sunday with a comfortable sense of performing a vague duty and at the same time passing an hour or so in an agreeable manner, hearing some good music and probably some novel doctrine, which can afterwards be discussed with much individual freedom of opinion; but to religion in any vital sense its very air is fatal. For its standards are not only of the world, but of the most trivial interests of the world—its fashions, amusements, and scandals. To dine, to dress, to drive, to cultivate distinguished acquaintances and know the last items of fashionable gossip—these are its supreme ends; and where in them is there food to satisfy an eager mind or an immortal soul? Surrounded by these trivialities, Sibyl had sought refuge in a literature which fascinated her by the high ideal of human conduct which it presented, by the teaching of an altruistic benevolence and of the possible ultimate perfection of humanity. This ideal fired her imagination and seemed to offer satisfaction to all the craving of which she had been conscious—craving for some supreme and noble end, the pursuit of which she felt to be necessary if life was to be of value.

But when she looked around for the disciples who practised these teachings of enthusiastic masters, whose eloquence and genius have for a time blinded many to the baselessness of their hopes, she found that instead of placing their happiness in the happiness of others, and of directing every effort to the elevation of the race, men and women were going their old accustomed ways and only accepting that part of the teaching which relieved them of responsibility to a higher power. Then came the tempter, in the form of Marmaduke Talford, to declare with a tone of assurance and authority: "You and all like you are dreamers, who know nothing of the actual conditions of life. Self-interest is, always has been, and always will be the basis of men's deeds; and to fancy that any motive for conduct can be devised strong enough to supplant self-interest is to fancy what all past history and present experience belie. Accept, then, the plain fact that the material goods of life are the only things of

which we can be certain, and its material pleasures the only objects worth our pursuit."

Now, it may readily be conceived that this was not a doctrine likely to please one whose nature yearned strongly and passionately toward ideal good, unless in the recoil of disappointment to which such a nature is subject. And it was a recoil which had set in strongly with Sibyl, as the impatient scorn which puzzled Egerton abundantly testified. "Why do you trifle away existence so ignobly? Why do not you, who are free as only a man can be free, find some high task worthy of a man's doing?" was the meaning that underlay all her contemptuous speeches. And it followed of necessity, had Egerton been able to perceive it, that she would not have been inclined to manifest this contempt to one whom she had felt to be incapable either of realizing or following the high intangible ideal that was in her thoughts. With Talford she showed none of it, because she was too keen an observer not to understand that he must be taken on a lower plane, as that which he defined himself to be—a man of the world, worldly, and a materialist of the most pronounced type. No good to chide *him* with lack of ideals and aims at which he only smiled. And so it came to pass that Sibyl began to question whether this man, whose knowledge of life was so wide and varied, might not have grasped its true meaning, and if it might not be the part of wisdom to put away from her for ever dreams and hopes destined apparently never to be realized. For there is no compromise possible with a nature like hers. It either believes and hopes all or it believes and hopes nothing; and the influence which was acting on her like a slow poison might have accomplished its end had not that which we call chance led her within the different influence of one whose heroism and whose sincerity she could not doubt.

Something of this she said to her mother, though not a great deal; for she was never expansive, unless sure of sympathy, and although there was much affection there was not much sympathy between mother and daughter. "I feel," she said as they sat at breakfast together the morning after her visit to the D'Antignacs', "as if I had received a mental stimulant and spiritual refreshment. I have had the sensation lately of one half-starved both mentally and spiritually; but I was fed and strengthened last night, and I am able again to make an act of faith in the possibility of human nobleness."

"My dear Sibyl!" said her mother in mild remonstrance. "Half-starved mentally and spiritually, and only able since last

night to make an act of faith in human nobleness! How very unflattering to all your friends and acquaintances!"

Sibyl laughed. "You see I was not thinking of all my friends and acquaintances, but only of the truth," she said. "I did not know how nearly starved I was until the relief of refreshment came. And such relief! Mamma, you must go to see M. d'Antignac. I have never known any one in the least like him. He is so strong and so simple, so patient and so gentle! He seems to look one through; but one does not mind it at all, there is so much comprehension and sympathy in the penetration."

"I don't know that I should care about being looked through," said Mrs. Bertram; "but he must be a very interesting person, and I am glad that you like him so much."

"He is much more than an interesting person," said Sibyl. "I know what interesting people are. They please and amuse one for a time by their cleverness or their wit or their originality. I have been interested by a great many such people; but when one gets to the end of them, when one knows all that one has to expect, there is an end of interest."

"Yes," said Mrs. Bertram, who knew—or thought she knew—her daughter on this point, "and when you get to the end of M. d'Antignac there will be an end of interest in him also."

"If you saw him you would not think so," answered Sibyl. "I can hardly express the manner in which he impresses me, but it is as if the interest he awakens does not depend so much on his personal qualities—charming though they are—as on certain great truths and principles of life which he seems to have grasped most fully and to be able to draw upon with a wonderful simplicity and directness. Absolutely there does not seem to be any self-consciousness about him. And when one feels one's self to be bristling with that very objectionable quality, one appreciates all the repose and strength that is the result of its absence."

"You are certainly very enthusiastic about M. d'Antignac, and not very complimentary to yourself," said Mrs. Bertram, smiling. "Are you 'bristling with self-consciousness'? I don't think any one would find it out."

"I find it out," said Sibyl, with a smile and a sigh.

She did not pursue the subject farther, but a few days later her surprise and pleasure were great at receiving a visit from Mlle. d'Antignac, who had told her that, though always glad to receive her friends, she seldom paid visits. Remembering this, Sibyl, as she greeted her, said quickly and cordially:

"I am much flattered that you have thought of me enough to come to see me."

"I am sure that you are well used to being thought of sufficiently for that or any other purpose," said Mlle. d'Antignac, with a smile. "But I must be quite frank and tell you that it is as much my brother's thought as my own that has brought me. 'Go to see Miss Bertram, and ask her to come and see me again,' he said. And I assure you that such a request from Raoul is flattering."

"I feel it so," answered Sibyl. "It must be simply his kindness. He must know how much I wish to see *him* again."

"Perhaps he does know it; sometimes I think that there are few things which he does not know or divine," said Mlle. d'Antignac. "But, however that may be, his interest in you and his desire to see you again are most undoubted. I foretold that it would be so," she said, with another smile. "I thought that you would please him, though I was not prepared for the determination he evinces not to lose sight of you."

"I must think better of myself since I am able to please M. d'Antignac," said Sibyl. "It seems to me incredible, for while I was talking to him I had a feeling as if he were looking me through and thinking what a poor, crude creature I was. But I did not mind the judgment. It seemed to be exercised with the compassion and gentleness of an angel." Then she suddenly flushed. "Perhaps this sounds to you extravagant," she said. "But it is really what I felt; and although my friends will tell you that I am prone to sudden enthusiasms, I tell you that these enthusiasms have been for things rather than persons. Clever and original people have often interested me, but I was never before conscious of the least inclination to bow down as before something higher than myself. Indeed, it is I who have always judged. I never before felt myself in the position of being judged."

"It is good for us that we should bow down occasionally, even in the most human point of view," said Mlle. d'Antignac, looking kindly at the brilliant young face, "else we are apt to become spiritually and intellectually arrogant. And it is good, too, that we should be judged now and then by some one more impartial and less intolerant than ourselves. For to judge himself justly is impossible to man—or woman either. One is either too lenient or too severe with one's self. Do not infer from this, however, that I think Raoul was really judging you. He was only 'tak-

ing the measure' of your mind, with a penetration which he possesses in singular degree; and the result is that he wishes to see you again. I think that speaks for itself."

"Almost too flatteringly," answered Sibyl, smiling. "But I need hardly say that I shall be delighted to respond to his wish and to gratify my own desire. May I ask when he receives visitors?"

"Any and every day after noon when he is well enough. But I must warn you that very often his most intimate friends come and he cannot see them; for there are times when suffering conquers even him and he exists simply in a state of agony. Those who know him best know that they have always the risk to run, but they do not mind it. They come, and if he cannot see them they go away, to come again."

"Surely a disappointment is little for them to bear when *he* is bearing so much," said Sibyl. "And is there no hope of cure, of alleviation? Can he never be better?"

"Never—here. 'He does not hope or dream of it. All his hopes are set in eternity, where alone he can know again the sense of existence without pain."

"It must make him wish to hasten there," said Sibyl in a low tone.

"You would think so, and no doubt he does long for it in a manner we cannot understand; but I have yet to hear the first murmur of impatience from his lips. And more than once he has said deliberately that, notwithstanding his suffering, he is more than willing to remain here as long as God has the smallest work for him to do."

"It seems to me that his is a great work—to aid, to counsel, to influence so many," said Sibyl. "I can judge what his influence must be by the effect which he has had upon me. And when one thinks that a man who is a prisoner, tied to his bed and racked with suffering, can do so much to make the burden of life lighter for others, what shame should we not feel who spend our days in talking of great deeds, yet do not the least!"

"The least is often the greatest," said Mlle. d'Antignac, understanding the ring of self-contempt in the voice. "There is nothing more useful for us to remember than that. And when we see the number of those who, in undertaking to set the world right, are only setting it wrong, we may be glad to be prevented from trying our hand at the same business, with probably the same result. But"—she rose—"these reflections are likely to lead one far afield, and I must not stay longer. I shall

hope to see you soon, and I echo Raoul's wish as well as my own in saying that I trust you may like us well enough to make one of our inner circle of familiar and habitual visitors."

CHAPTER XVIII.

FAR down in Brittany stands the old Château de Marigny in the midst of a wide domain. Terraces and gardens and green woods, intersected by long, grassy avenues, surround it, while beyond a great extent of moorland stretches toward the sea, which beats ever against the scarred and riven face of the cliffs that surround this stormy coast. Across the wide uplands breezes fresh with the briny freshness of the great deep blow and carry the thunder of the waves over the leafy tree-tops to the château, as it stands above its formal terraces with their time-stained marble balustrades and broad flights of steps leading down to the gardens below.

Near the château is the village of Marigny, filled chiefly with the simple and devout fisher-folk of the Breton coast, among whom revolution makes scant progress; but a few miles distant is a large town, and here a sufficient number of the discontented class are to be found to serve as a basis for the work of the political agitator. In this, as the most important place of the district, Duchesne established himself when he came down to conduct the campaign against the Vicomte de Marigny; and here all the elements of opposition centred around him.

It may be thought that in loyal Brittany these elements would not count for much; but in France, above all other places on the earth, extremes of good and evil confront each other. Who, for instance, that enters the crowded churches of Paris, with their devout throngs of men and women, but finds it difficult to realize that he is in the midst of that great capital where blasphemy and vice walk hand-in-hand along the glittering streets? And in Lyons and Marseilles—hot-beds of revolution as they are—who does not know that one has not far to seek to find Christians with the virtues of the apostolic age, true confessors of the faith and spiritual children of the martyrs? While regarding the immense hosts of pilgrims to the shrine of Notre Dame de Lourdes, with their passionate appeals to the Mother of God to save France, it is hard to understand that the same France which produced these pious

souls could also produce the maddened hordes of the Revolution and the Commune. And so even in Christian Brittany the evil watchwords of an evil time are heard, and men are seduced by the old promises of the tempter and intoxicated by the specious arguments and appeals of Socialism.

Duchesne, therefore, found material enough to work upon, though probably not enough to secure the defeat of the Vicomte de Marigny. To effect this end, however, he spared no effort either publicly or secretly—for there were secret meetings of societies which dared not yet avow themselves and their true aims in the light of day, but which, with many stern resolutions, pledged themselves to oppose the Vicomte de Marigny by any and all means. "For this is no ordinary man," the speakers said, "with no ordinary power to retard and injure the great cause of humanity. He is no mere obstructionist whom the flood will sweep over, but one who defies and gives battle, who leads and sways men. Therefore he is to be crushed at any cost." And the assembly with one voice cried, "*Écrasez le !*" as, given a little more power, they would have cried, "*À la guillotine !*" And so it was determined that M. de Marigny should be crushed—by fair means, if possible; but, these failing, by any such as were justified by the need of advancing the cause of revolution.

Meanwhile the days passed pleasantly and not without some gleams of pleasure to Armine. She saw little of her father and knew little of what he was doing; but ignorance is welcome to one who shrinks from the weight of knowledge. She tried to forget for what purpose they had come, and to interest herself in the quaint customs and architecture of the old Breton town. She never tired of wandering through the picturesque, mediæval streets, the sunshiny squares, the curious old courts and many churches. In some respects it was like other places in which she had been before, yet there was a difference, a flavor of distinct nationality which attracted and pleased her. Then the piety of the people was so deep, their devotion so earnest and spontaneous! As she often knelt in the corner of some crowded church—taking care always to shelter herself behind a great pillar, for it did not seem to her as if her father's daughter had a right to be there—she felt thrilled in every fibre by the chant which rose from the depth of those Celtic hearts, by the intensity of the faith which breathed in every act and word of the worshippers. And it was then that she began to realize that her father's passionate

devotion to his ideal was only the religious instinct of the Breton turned into another channel. He might disown the God of his fathers, but he could not divest himself of the earnestness which was his inheritance from them, or the instinct of faith which, having lost the heavenly, now sought an earthly end. For no light scoffing or lighter indifference is possible to the Breton soul. Loyalty and enthusiasm are inbred in it, and, in its passionate tenacity, it is the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made.

But these tranquil and uneventful days did not last long. One morning Duchesne said suddenly: "You must be growing tired of this dull life, *petite*. It was hardly worth while to exchange Paris for it. But you shall have a little diversion, or at least a little change, to-day. It is necessary that I should go to the village of Marigny, and I will take you with me."

"To Marigny!" said Armine. Despite her efforts she shrank visibly. "I am very well satisfied here, *mon père*. I think I would rather not go."

"Why not?" asked her father, with some surprise and a glance which expressed a shade of suspicion. "What do you know of Marigny? Why should you not wish to go?"

"I know nothing of Marigny," she answered. "But I like this place, and I am quite content to remain here."

"I am not content to leave you here, however," said her father. "There is no reason why you should not enjoy a visit to Marigny. You seemed anxious to see something of Brittany, and that is a typical Breton village. Besides, you will have a glimpse of the coast. It is only a drive of a few miles. You must go."

"How soon shall we start?" she asked, seeing that resistance was useless with no better reason than she had to give.

"In an hour," her father answered; "and we shall return this evening."

In an hour they were driving along the road to Marigny, and Armine acknowledged that the motion and the air of the balmy day were as charming as the view of the country outspread in all its spring beauty under the golden sunshine. A soft breeze rippled the growing grain in the fields as they passed; lark after lark poured forth its song above them in the blue depths of the sky; cool and deep on the hillsides lay the shadow of the immemorial woods of Brittany, and the earth seemed carpeted by the wild flowers that grew and rioted in every available space of ground. As they advanced the breeze which blew steadily in

their faces grew more and more laden with the salt freshness of the sea; and at length a wide, green heath opened before them, golden with the flowers of the broom, while afar on the distant horizon was a blue, flashing line of restless water.

Along one side of their way, however, the shade still extended. But suddenly the road turned; they passed some iron gates; the coachman, pointing with his whip, said, "*Voilà le château!*" and there was a glimpse up a long, straight avenue of a stately house standing with many-windowed façade above a flight of terraces. Neither Armine nor her father spoke. The latter did not turn his head; but she, following with her eyes the direction of the pointing whip, saw the château, with its steep roof and iron balconies, and the broad steps leading down from the terrace to the shady avenue, framed like a picture at the end of the green vista. It was but a momentary view. They passed on, and a few minutes later came in sight of the parish church, situated on the outskirts of the village on the side toward the château. It was an old and picturesque edifice, built of the red granite of the coast, the ruddy hue of which contrasted effectively with the green moss that clung about its tower and tiled roof. Around it was the graveyard, with the sunshine falling softly on the stone crosses of the graves and over a large Calvary which dominated the enclosure and sanctified death.

The village itself was situated farther beyond, and its long, straggling street led toward a cliff, down the face of which a steep path went by rudely-cut and somewhat dangerous steps to the beach where the fishing-boats lay. Armine uttered a cry of delight when, standing on the edge of this precipitous steep, she beheld the great plain of heaving, flashing sapphire at her feet, the creamy line of surf breaking far below, the blue outlines of distant capes, and the majestic cliffs, storm-rent and torn into fantastic shapes by the never-ceasing warfare of the sea, stretching for miles on each side.

But it was not until they had taken their *déjeuner* at the inn that she went out with her father and saw this sight, the grandeur of which thrilled and fascinated her. She knew the charm of southern shores, all the loveliness of earth and sea and sky which makes the coasts of Italy for ever enchanted. But what was it to the wild beauty of this Breton coast—to this gigantic bulwark of towering heights, which, washed and worn into stupendous forms of arches, pinnacles, and spires, stood like the remnants of a titanic world and breasted for ever the rage of the sea? There was, however, no suggestion of

rage or tempest in the scene now calm and peaceful as a dream of heaven. The waves were rippling gently on the yellow sands and around the base of the mighty monoliths and columns of crimson granite; the great crags rose like ærial battlements bathed in sunlight; on the blue liquid expanse that melted afar into the sky white sails stole along and the great wings of gulls darted and flashed.

"It is more than beautiful—it is so grand that it fills one with awe," said Armine. "I should like to stay here for days, long enough to take it all in!"

"If I had time," said her father, "we would stay for a few days at any rate; you would enjoy it even more than you think. I knew the coast well once. It is wild and picturesque, and terrible to a degree you can hardly imagine. But there is a wonderful fascination about it. Many of these cliffs are honey-combed with caves, which the sea enters at high tide, where one may float in a boat and look up at walls hundreds of feet high, carved into strange architectural semblances and gleaming with color."

"Ah!" said Armine, "I should like to see that. Can we not stay for a little while? It would surely be good for you to take a short rest—you who work so hard!"

"There is need to work," said her father. "Rest is not for one who hears the cries of multitudes in his ears, who labors for the great cause of humanity. I have come here to-day for a purpose—to see one who professes to have information which he will give to me, and me alone. And that reminds me that I have not more time to spare at present. I must take you back to the inn while I attend to this business."

"Can I not go down there and wait?" asked Armine, pointing to the shining beach below.

He shook his head. "No; I could not let you descend the path alone. Moreover, the place is too solitary. You might be annoyed."

"Then," said Armine with some hesitation, "I will go back through the village to the church. No one will annoy me *there*, and I—I should like to see it."

"You will probably find little to see," said her father indifferently; "but it is as good a place as another to wait. I will join you there, then, in the course of an hour."

And so Armine found herself walking back alone, her father, after some reluctance, having parted with her and gone his way, which led to the outskirts of the village in another direction.

She walked rapidly, for she was glad of an opportunity to enter the church, which she had hardly hoped to be able to do ; and she paid little attention to the appearance of the village, nor did she notice the people who looked at her curiously as she passed through it. But presently there came a sound which attracted her attention and made her almost unconsciously glance up. It was the clatter of a horse's feet along the street, and as she lifted her eyes they encountered the regard of the rider, who was no other than the Vicomte de Marigny.

It was the meeting she had vaguely dreaded ever since she entered Brittany, and quite especially feared in going to Marigny. Now that it had come to pass her first impulse was to hurry on, hoping to escape recognition. But even in the instant of the impulse she realized that she was fully recognized. Something of surprise the vicomte's glance expressed, but there was not a shade of doubt in it, and as he met her eyes he lifted his hat and bowed.

It was the perfection of what such a greeting should have been, with not a shade too much or too little *empressement*. The villagers looking on felt a sudden increase of respect for the lady walking down their street, to whom M. le Vicomte bowed as if she had been Madame la Comtesse from a neighboring château, and were quite sure that, notwithstanding her unattended condition, she must be a person of rank. Armine, meanwhile, acknowledged the salutation hastily, and, dropping her eyes, again walked on even more rapidly than before, her face flushed and her heart beating as she said to herself : " He is worthy to be M. d'Antignac's friend. He knows who I am—he must know why I am here—and yet he greets me as if I were a princess. He is a true *gentilhomme*."

But after this burst of feeling a sense of keen regret overpowered her—regret that he had seen her, regret that she had ever consented to come to Marigny. For so little had she imbibed the spirit of modern democracy that it seemed to her a shameful thing to come into a man's own home, among his hereditary dependants, and endeavor to seduce them from allegiance to him. And that, she felt quite sure, was what her father was doing. Yet even as she thought this her heart was none the less loyal to that father. To *him*, she knew, the work in which he was engaged wore the aspect of a high and holy duty ; but it had no such aspect to her, and therefore she was sorry to be identified with it in the opinion of the Vicomte de Marigny. Why the opinion of the Vicomte de Ma-

rigny should have mattered to her she did not ask herself. She only felt that it was hard to be regarded as an enemy by one whom she would willingly have served as a friend.

But that life is full of hard things was no new experience to Armine. With the short, quick sigh of one who carries an habitual burden, she lifted her eyes again, and this time they fell on the group of Calvary in the churchyard which she was now approaching. Outlined against the fair blue sky stood the dark form of the cross, as another cross was once outlined against the sky of Palestine, and on it the divine Figure hung with drooping, thorn-crowned head—the “sign of contradiction” now as of old. For even as the Jews gathered around the cross, reviling the Son of God in his agony, so modern revolutionists and infidels proclaim most clearly whose children they are and whose work they do when their first rage is directed against the crucifix, and their first work always and everywhere is to tear it down. Nor is it remarkable that they do so. For how should a rebellious and self-seeking generation endure to look upon the supreme type of obedience, patience, and sacrifice?

These things the crucifix preaches with a force which no eloquence of man can equal, and at this moment it had its message for Armine. She paused and stood for a moment motionless, her clear eyes uplifted with a wistful look and fastened on the touching form of Love divine. All was still around her. The quiet graves lay steeped in sunshine, which sparkled here and there on the little wells of holy water. The church stood in the midst, full of repose; from the gentle eminence on which it was placed there was a view of the country for miles around, and over the distant tree-tops a glimpse of the château, had Armine known where to look for it. But she was not thinking of the prospect, fair though it was. A moment had come to her like that of which she had spoken to Egerton on the portico of the Madeleine—a moment when the pain of tumult suddenly ceased and she felt herself in the guidance of a hand that never errs. After all, was it mere chance which brought her here? At this instant she felt a conviction, strong as a personal assurance, that it was not; and if it was not—if, for any reason now dark to her, it was God’s will—then all was easy. She had only to bear with patience the old burden of pain and doubt, and a new burden of misunderstanding, which surely did not matter.

Saying this to herself, she walked up the grassy path and entered the little church.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE church proved to be old within as well as without, and, like many French parish churches, much in need of repair; but it was not unpicturesque and was full of that solemn repose which pervades the humblest of these ancient temples of faith. High, narrow windows let down a dim light on the altar and the faded fresco above it; while in the gloom the massive antique lamp before the tabernacle burned with its red light steady as a star.

Armene knelt down on one of the low chairs with a singular sense of having reached a spot toward which she had been journeying. The feeling which had so suddenly laid hold of her in the churchyard was still strongly present with her, like the close, firm pressure of a hand. She could understand that, for she had known it before; but why should she feel as if this place, into which she had entered as a stranger, had some claim upon her life which was not strange? She looked up at the dark old walls, at the dusky roof, at the altar with its candles and crucifix. Why should this spot seem more to her than many another where she had knelt before the same sacramental Presence?

There was no answer—naturally she could expect none—but in a time which came after she looked back with a sense of awe to this strange feeling which signalized her first entrance into the church of Marigny.

At present, however, it was a feeling which passed, absorbed by deeper and stronger ones. The sight of M. de Marigny had recalled to her memory the impending conflict, which was but part of a greater and wider conflict fraught with tremendous issues. How tremendous, indeed, these issues were no one knew better than the girl in whose ears from infancy the revolutionary gospel had sounded, preached by many men in many tongues, but ever with the same burden. Young as she was, she had seen triumphs of which the revolutionary apostles themselves had hardly dared to dream; and she was well aware what their aims now were. Was it not coming again, the day when shrines such as this would be closed by those who shamed and belied France by denying God in her name? She knew that it might be so; that the earth was

hollow underneath, and that while those who should defend religion halted, delayed, wasted their strength in differences, the great attacking army was marching on, led by hearts like that of her father, strong in singleness of purpose and devotion. As she thought of these things her own heart sank within her. She was like one torn in two, hardly knowing how to pray. It was, as Egerton had felt, a hard fate which arrayed this loving soul against one whom it was her natural impulse to follow and to honor; harder still that she could not desire his success, though knowing how ardently *he* longed for it. She thought of all his toil and sacrifice with a great pang of pain and pity. At this moment, as in many, many moments before, the riddle of life pressed heavily upon her. Honest, misguided souls, working with heroic fervor for an end full of evil—who that looks out on the world to-day does not feel the pity of this? And there are some to whom, as to Armine, it comes with the added force of personal feeling and knowledge. These will understand how she could only lay her heart at the foot of the crucifix, knowing that neither formal nor articulate prayer was necessary to enable God to read its hopes and fears.

But at length peace came like gentle dew from heaven. "See, poor heart," a voice from the still depths of the tabernacle seemed to say, "canst thou not trust for others, for a great cause, for France, as well as for thyself? What is thy pity to mine? What is thy knowledge to that exactest justice and tenderest mercy with which I read the hearts of erring men and comprehend their full degree of intent or of blindness? And for the rest, is my power less because men deny it, or because I suffer them to taste the full consequences of such denial?" And then again she felt that all things were easy to bear, as, indeed, all things must be to one who realizes that God's arm is not shortened; that in the present and future, as in the past, he will most surely govern with omniscient wisdom the world which he has created; and that the church is never stronger than in the hour when all human aid is withdrawn from her—nay, when all human power is arrayed against her—and she leans for support on his promise alone.

Half an hour later Armine was still kneeling, with her head bent forward in her hands, when a step entered behind her, rang on the paved aisle as it advanced, then paused, and after an interval receded again. She hardly noticed it until she heard the baize door swing shut as it passed out; and then

she lifted her head with a start, for she thought of her father, and remembered that he had promised to come to the church for her. Knowing his aversion to churches, however, she felt that she would prefer to go to meet him. She rose, therefore, gave a last look at the quaint old altar, the dim picture and the shining lamp—feeling again as if some strange tie bound her to this place—and then walked slowly out.

The brightness of the day dazzled her eyes as she emerged from the obscurity of the church and paused a moment in the picturesque old porch, shading them with her hand until they became accustomed to the change. Indeed, the scene was enough to dazzle any eyes, flooded as it was just now with sunlight. The green fields stretching inland, the golden-starred heath stretching seaward, the flashing, distant water, and the blue sky bending down to meet it—all were strong in vivid color, and so also were the glistening gables of the village and its stone-tiled roofs.

Suddenly—was it a sound or an instinct that made Armine look round? She scarcely knew; but look she did, to see a tall figure coming toward her from the direction of the presbytery, which adjoined the church. It needed an instant's glance only to assure her that it was the Vicomte de Marigny, and with a beating heart she turned quickly to go. But the vicomte was very near at hand, and as she was about to step out of the shadow of the porch he stood before her, uncovering and speaking with the same air of gracious courtesy as when they met last in Paris.

"I am happy to see you at Marigny, mademoiselle. I hope that you are well?"

"Quite well, M. le Vicomte, *je vous remercie*," she answered in a low tone, while her eyes regarded him with an expression half-startled, half-wistful.

"And you will let me inquire how you left our friend M. d'Antignac—for it is likely that you have seen him since I have?"

"I have seen him only once since the day I left you with him," she replied; "and that was the next day. I bade him good-by then, for I was leaving Paris."

"Ah!" said the vicomte. He remembered now that he had heard of Duchesne's arrival in Brittany as almost immediately following his own, and of course his daughter was with him. Poor girl! It was a sad fate for her to be tossed hither and thither by every wave of political agitation. He under-

stood perfectly the look in her appealing eyes at present, and all the chivalry of his nature was stirred to show her that he did not regard her as identified in the least with her father.

"Then you have been some time in Brittany," he said. "I hope that it has pleased you? We are, perhaps, inordinately proud of our country, we Bretons."

"It seems to me that it would not be possible for any one not to be proud of such a country," she answered in a voice which had in it a thrill of pathetic music. "It is so beautiful, so interesting, and so full of the most touching traditions of the past; but, more than that, the people seem to be so strong in faith and so simple in virtue. I think you need only pray, M. le Vicomte, that it may not change."

He understood the sympathy which the words expressed, the look in the clear, golden eyes with their wistful light. More and more he was touched, interested, charmed by this sensitive face, which, with its quick and transparent changes of feeling, was, as Egerton had once said, "like a poem."

"You are very kind," he answered. "I am glad that you have felt the charm of Brittany, for it is as much a spiritual as a material charm. And the longer you remained the more you would feel it. For my part, when I get down into my old château by the sea I feel as if I never cared to leave it and go back into the mad whirl of the Paris world. You wonder, then, why I go?" with a slight smile, as he caught a look in her eyes. "Well, it is only because the humblest soldier in the ranks of a great army must not throw away his gun as long as he can fire a shot, and perhaps because I have a little pleasure in fighting, too. But you must not suffer me to detain you, mademoiselle. Being in the presbytery, when I saw you emerge from the church I could not refrain from coming to pay my respects. I have now the honor to bid you good-day."

He bowed and turned again toward the presbytery, where the curé could be seen through the window, breviary in hand, while Armine stepped from the porch and walked toward the gate.

She reached it before she perceived a figure on the road advancing toward the church, which she recognized at once to be that of her father. Knowing his long sight, her mind misgave her a little. If he had seen her speaking to the Vicomte de Marigny what would he think, and how could she explain the true significance of their short interview? She waved her hand and hurried forward to meet him. But his first words proved her fears to be well founded.

"Who was that man with whom you were talking in the porch?" he asked as soon as they met.

Now, perhaps it is impossible for any one not to look a little guilty when accosted in this manner, and when conscious that the name to be pronounced will have an obnoxious sound in the ears of the person addressed. Armine certainly colored a little, but her eyes met her father's full and steadily.

"It was the Vicomte de Marigny," she replied.

"The Vicomte de Marigny!" repeated Duchesne. They had paused as they met, and were now standing face to face. He looked at his daughter for a moment in amazement too deep for expression, but not too deep for wrath. His face flushed; there came a flash like lightning into the eyes, above which the dark brows knitted, as he said sternly: "And how is it that the Vicomte Marigny ventured to address you?"

"Because I have met him before," she answered, "and I knew no reason why I should not acknowledge the acquaintance."

"You have met him before! Where?"

"At M. d'Antignac's, in Paris."

"And why have I never heard of such a meeting?"

"I only met him once or twice," she said, "and it never occurred to me to mention what seemed to me a matter of no importance."

There was a moment's silence, while her father regarded her with eyes that seemed to look her through and through. Never before had Armine seen such an expression on his face, and never before had she been called upon to endure that hardest of all things to one conscious of integrity—undeserved suspicion. Her father had always trusted her implicitly and treated her with a kindness that never varied. But now—was it to be her fate now to stand like a culprit, trembling before a suspicion which she could not disprove?

If she trembled, however, it was at least not perceptibly. Having uttered her few words of explanation, she stood with perfect composure and eyes as clear as noonday, meeting the glance bent on her. But it was evident that she had not disarmed her father's anger.

"So," he said at length in a bitter tone, "this explains why I have an enemy at my own hearth; this explains why your sympathies are with priests and nobles, and why you seek the society of such friends as the D'Antignacs! It also explains why you did not wish to accompany me to Marigny. Well,

he is a fool who looks for anything but folly and deceit in a woman!"

"It is likely that I might be guilty of folly," said Armine in a slightly trembling voice, "but deceit—if I have ever deceived or spoken falsely to you it would be just to charge me with that. But you know that I have never done so."

"How should I know it?" asked her father in the same bitter tone. "Because I have not discovered the deception? That is poor proof. I begin to understand many things now to which I have been blind through too much trust. Oh! yes, it grows very plain—all your reactionary sympathies, your fondness for such places as that!" He made a fierce gesture toward the church. "It is only an old story—that a man should be betrayed by the one nearest to him."

Then it was that tears came into the clear, dark eyes, forced there by wounded feeling rather than by indignation.

"But what is it that you suspect me of?" she asked. "How do you think that I am deceiving you? I have told you the simple truth. I met M. de Marigny once or twice at the D'Antignacs'. But our acquaintance was so slight that I could not have expected him to recognize me when he met me elsewhere. I was surprised when he came up to speak to me yonder; but I am sure that it was only an instinct of courtesy and kindness which made him do so."

"You are sure!" said her father, with biting irony. "And what, pray, do you know of this man or of the order to which he belongs? If you knew anything you would not talk of his acting from 'courtesy and kindness.' His motive is plain enough—to *me*. If your acquaintance with him is really what you represent, then he must suspect—Come!" he broke off harshly, "we will go. This is no place in which to linger. Whether by weakness or by intent, you have played into the hands of my enemy and made more difficult what is before me to do."

He turned as he spoke and began to walk rapidly in the direction of the village—so rapidly that Armine found it difficult to keep pace with him. To walk very fast and to talk at the same time is next to impossible; so she made no attempt to answer his last speech—which, indeed, was incomprehensible to her. How did he suspect her of having played into the hands of his enemy, and in what possible manner could she have made more difficult what he had to do? Were his words dictated merely by the unreason of anger? If so, what

was the good of attempting to answer them? She had already told the "simple truth." There was nothing else to tell. Her word was all that she could oppose to his suspicion, and it seemed that her word had lost its value; so she could only walk on silently and sadly.

CHAPTER XX.

THE drive from Marigny was both for Armine and her father a silent and constrained one. The first serious estrangement of their lives had arisen between them and was deeply felt by both, but naturally most by the girl, who tasted for the first time the bitterness of an alienated trust. It seemed to her as incredible as it was wounding that such a thing should be possible, that the father who had known her in the closest and most intimate manner all her life could doubt her truth, could believe her capable of deceiving him.

And this is indeed the sharpest sting of suspicion where suspicion is undeserved—that one is so little known as to be held capable of that which is suspected. The sense of outrage is mingled with amazement and the keen realization that, however well we may think that we know or are known, we are but strangers to each other after all. "If I could show you my heart!" many a misjudged soul has passionately cried; but hearts are not to be shown in this mortal order, where we see many things besides the truths of God "as through a glass darkly," and have occasion for the exercise of faith in the human as in the divine.

Occasion for the exercise of much patience, too, poor Armine felt, realizing keenly how unjustly she was judged and how little she had done to bring this trial upon herself. She glanced now and then at her father as he lay back in a corner of the carriage with lowered eyes and a darkly-clouded brow. Here was a manifestation of character which she had never seen before, of some secret force of feeling to which she had not the key. For she found it almost impossible to believe that he could entertain such bitter animosity toward the Vicomte de Marigny simply because the latter belonged to a detested order and was his opponent in politics; or if his intensity of feeling did rest on these grounds, it proved a narrowness of mind which she could with difficulty credit. For she had often said to herself—recognizing clearly in those with whom she came in contact the envy which is the moving spring of democratic

sentiments—that her father was at least free of this; that he was blinded by a high ideal, not filled with mere hatred of all who were above him in the world. But now what other explanation was possible of his feeling toward M. de Marigny, unless there was some personal question involved, which seemed too improbable to be considered? And whatever was the cause of the feeling, to object to meet even a foe on the neutral ground of courtesy shocked the girl, who had never before seen in her father anything petty.

In thoughts like these mile after mile of the way passed, and it was no wonder that her face was pale when they drove at sunset into the town which they had left in the morning. Her father observed this paleness as they alighted, and said in something of his usual tone:

“You look tired. The drive has been too long for you. It would have been better if I had left you at home.”

“Much better,” she answered in a low voice, while the tears sprang quickly to her eyes. She was about to add, “You know I did not wish to go,” when she remembered that this disinclination had been charged against her; so she turned without saying anything more and entered the house.

Duchesne, after paying the coachman, followed, but found the *salon* of the apartment which they occupied empty. He glanced around it, took a step toward his daughter's room, then paused, as if on second thought, and went to a table which stood between two windows, where a pile of letters and papers brought by the day's mail lay.

He was soon absorbed in these, and did not glance around when a servant came in, who laid a dinner-table with covers for two. But when Armine presently entered he turned, saying, in a manner which showed that, for the present at least, all that had lately passed was absent from his mind:

“I find that I must return to Paris to-morrow. I have just received an imperative summons. I am needed, they tell me, for more important work than what I am about here. It is very plain that they do not realize how important this work is. But nevertheless the summons cannot be disregarded; and, fortunately, I have done nearly all that I can do. You must be ready to leave to-morrow by an early train, Armine.”

“Very well,” answered Armine, with a great sense of relief and of positive gratitude toward the revolutionary authorities, whoever they might be, who thus opportunely changed the position for her. “I will pack everything to-night,” she

said with cheerful readiness. "At what hour to-morrow shall we start?"

"The earliest train goes at five, I think," said her father. "We must leave by that. Meanwhile"—he began gathering together his papers hastily—"I shall have much to do to-night. I have many persons to see. I do not think I can wait for dinner."

"But it is served," said Armine, as the servant entered with the soup. "Pray do not go out without taking something after our long drive."

"The drive was nothing," he said. But he sat down to table nevertheless, and, although he ate little and was silent and abstracted, Armine saw that the cloud of the afternoon had passed away. He was plainly thinking of other things; and it was only when dinner was over, when his cup of coffee had been placed before him and the servant had left the room, that his thoughts came back to the occurrences of the day, and, glancing at his daughter, he was touched by the look of her wistful, pathetic eyes.

"See, *petite*," he said not unkindly, "I spoke to-day harshly, and perhaps not quite justly. I am willing to believe that you meant no harm, that you were guilty only of folly. Let us think no more of it. But understand this: I can tolerate no acquaintance with the Vicomte de Marigny. If you meet him at the house of those friends in Paris of whom you spoke, you must go to them no more. Apart from that I am sure that you obtain no good from them."

"I obtain only good!" cried Armine quickly, alarm and appeal mingled on her face. "Oh! do not say that I must give them up. They have been—they are—so much to me! You know the length of my acquaintance with them, yet I have only met M. de Marigny in their house twice. If I ever meet him again I will promise not to speak to him, since you do not wish me to do so; but oh! do not say that I must give up M. and Mlle. d'Antignac."

"And why," said her father, regarding her keenly and suspiciously, "are you so much attached to M. and Mlle. d'Antignac?"

"Ah! it would take me long to tell that," she answered, clasping her hands in the energy of her feeling. "I only know that I have few friends—very few—and, after yourself, there are none whom I love like them."

"So much the worse," he said sternly, "for they have

taught you to array yourself in feeling against me and the ends of my life. Do you think I have been blind to that? I said to myself, 'It is a girl's fancy; what does it matter?' But I have learned to-day that it *does* matter, and I blame myself for allowing associations which have resulted in such an end. For there may be power in your hand for evil or for good—"

He broke off abruptly, and, setting down his cup of coffee, rose, while Armine watched him with a gaze full of surprise and apprehension. Power for evil or for good in *her* hand! With a vague sense of amazement she looked at it as it lay before her. Could there be conceived a weaker, a more empty hand? That was the thought which flitted through her mind. Had her father lost his senses, or what did he mean?

He had evidently no intention of explaining. After a moment's silence he said in an altered tone: "*Eh bien*, thou art but a child, and it may not matter. It is likely that we may not be much longer in Paris, and new associations will bring new ideas. Now I must go. Be ready for our early start in the morning; and, in order to be ready, go to bed as soon as possible."

He nodded and went out, while Armine proceeded to set about the duty of preparing for departure. It was a duty with which she was very familiar through long practice; but as she moved about the apartment, gathering up all their belongings with quick, deft fingers, her heart was heavy, for her father's words echoed in her ears, "We may not be much longer in Paris," and she knew all that this sentence of banishment meant for her—the lonely days in some strange place, the absence from those whom she loved and to whom she had grown accustomed to look for guidance, and the companionship of those from whom she was to receive "new ideas." And what was to be the end? She dared not ask herself, dared not attempt to look forward into the future; but after her work was done, weary and exhausted by the exertions of the day, she commended her present and her future to God, and, lying down, fell immediately asleep.

It seemed to her that she had been asleep a long time, but in reality it was not more than an hour or two, when she was waked by the sound of voices near at hand—waked suddenly, abruptly, and with that sense of sharpened and acute hearing which people often feel when they are roused by

some unusual sound at night. Armine, no doubt, was more readily startled from having gone to sleep with a weight of anxiety upon her mind; but certainly when she came fully to herself she was sitting on the side of her bed, listening with strained attention to the voices murmuring in the next room. And these were the first words which she heard with entirely awakened attention:

"You may be sure," said a deep, harsh tone, "that if the election goes against us—as I am beginning to fear that it certainly will—the clerical shall not take his seat. We have sworn that."

"And how will you prevent it?" asked Duchesne's voice—doubly clear and musical by contrast with the one which had spoken before.

"It will not be difficult to prevent," said the other. "A little dynamite will settle the matter; and if the château goes as well as its owner, why, so much the better! The next revolution will not leave one of those relics of the oppression of the people standing."

"Perhaps not," said Duchesne; "but it will be well to wait for the revolution before beginning to demolish them. We must go slowly, *mon cher*; and, above all, we must avoid ill-timed violence. If M. de Marigny is elected he must be allowed to take his seat. It will never do for our enemies to say that, having failed to defeat, we proceeded to assassinate him."

"Why not? It will strike terror; and that is a very good effect," said the other obstinately. "Other royalists and clericals will hesitate to oppose the rights of the people as boldly as this man. He is one with whom there should be no quarter."

"Bah!" said Duchesne. "If he takes his seat what harm can he do—one of a weak and divided minority? No, Lafour, listen, and understand that I speak with the authority of the council which sent me when I say *there must be no violence*. It would be ill-advised in the highest degree. We are struggling here in Brittany, we are in a minority, and we have neither the ear nor the heart of the great mass of the people. The priests control them yet, and the priests would say, 'See! are not all our warnings proved well founded?' No; the thing must not be done. It is, after all, an extreme measure, only justified by the sacredness of our cause in extreme cases."

"And is not this an extreme case?" persisted the other,

who plainly did not wish to yield. "We are not strong enough to defeat the man by votes, else we might afford to despise him. We must, therefore, by more direct measures put it out of his power to misrepresent us."

"It would be a blunder, which is worse than a crime," said Duchesne with incisive energy; "and I repeat once more that, with the power of the council, I positively forbid it. I have gained all that I hoped or expected in coming here. I did not either hope or expect to defeat De Marigny; but we have used the election as a means to stir up popular feeling and popular thought, and to introduce the leaven of revolutionary principles more fully than it has been introduced before. It will work and bear fruit, and your societies must do the rest. Every man brought into them is a man wrested from the influence of the priests."

"*Sacré!*" was the answer like a deep growl. "I should like to make an end of that influence for ever, to banish every priest from France. That is the only chance for our final success."

"They will soon be banished from the schools—they and all their superstitions," said Duchesne. "That will give us the next generation; and when we have a nation of free-thinkers all that we desire will come about quickly enough. Patience, my friend; great results are not won in a day. We must work with our eyes on the future; we must not injure our cause by ill-judged haste in the present. Come, now, let us go over a few more details, and then I must bid you good-night, for I should like a little rest before my early departure to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE voices then turned to the consideration of things and people unknown to Armine; but she still sat motionless, as if petrified, on the side of the bed. A vista of terror seemed to open before her, and could any one have seen her in the darkened chamber she would have appeared to be gazing down it with dilated eyes. In truth, she was seeing many things—the face that had looked into hers that day on the threshold of the church of Marigny, the old château standing above its terraces, and a vision of the violence that threatened both. For she felt instinctively that there was no

security that her father's commands would be obeyed. Why should men who have renounced all allegiance to divine or human authority obey their self-constituted guides farther than it pleases them to do so? The law of private judgment has been found to be applicable to other things besides religion. It has risen in the form of resolution to overthrow governments, and it will most certainly assert itself in the form of insubordination wherever and whenever it is safe to do so. This knowledge—which seems curiously hidden from the self-willed and presumptuous leaders of our time—is clearly evident to all who look at things from a more logical point of view, and is abundantly proved by experience.

Duchesne's command, therefore, did not reassure his daughter, though it filled her with infinite relief so far as he was concerned. She had been shocked by the degree of personal animosity which he seemed to feel toward M. de Marigny, and which was absolutely unintelligible to her; but now she recognized the temper of the generous foeman which she had missed before. He might hate, he might oppose with all his fiery strength, but no degree of hatred or opposition could lead him to things base and unworthy. With all her heart she thanked God for that knowledge.

But M. de Marigny! How could she go away and leave him in ignorance of the desires and (she felt sure) the intentions of his enemies? If she might send him a word of warning—a word which, though it needs must be vague, might put him on his guard! She half-rose with the impulse to do this, then sank down again. No, it was impossible. For if such a word of warning came from her, would he fail to draw the conclusion that her father had a part in that against which she warned him? And could she throw a suspicion so dark and so unjust upon that father who had just interposed his authority to save the man he hated, who refused consent to a mode of warfare as cowardly as it was base?

What, then, was she to do? Had this thing come to her knowledge for nothing? Had she been roused so suddenly and strangely out of sleep—as if some strong influence had bidden her wake and listen—only to tremble and fear and take no action? If she left this man to such a threatening fate, without the word of warning that might save him, how would she bear the after-burden of self-reproach should he suffer harm? Yet was it possible for her to cast on her father an odium which he could never disprove? Would she not be

the most disloyal of daughters, would she not deserve all that he had said of her that day, if she could do so? She felt like one tossed on a sea of doubt, longing for light and direction. But where should she turn to seek these things? She lifted her hands above her head and clasped them as in agony; then, with them still so clasped, fell upon her knees.

Before she rose the voices in the adjoining room had ceased, the visitor had departed, and she had heard her father retire to his chamber. Then all was still, and she had the quiet of the solemn night in which to decide on her course of action. But as time went on, and she still knelt motionless, half-fallen forward upon the couch from which she had risen, with her hands still clasped above her head, it seemed as if the decision would never be made. But finally the light for which she was pleading made itself clear. She rose, turned up the dimly-burning lamp, and going to her trunk, packed for departure, opened it noiselessly and took out writing materials. Then she sat down and wrote hastily these few lines:

"M. LE VICOMTE: In case you are elected there are those among your opponents who desire to put it out of your power to represent them. They will do so at the cost of your life, if necessary. The sanction of the leaders has been refused, but an attempt against you may be made nevertheless. Therefore be on your guard. One who wishes you well sends this warning, and only asks in return that your suspicions may do no one injustice, and that you will understand that what you have to fear is the *undirected* violence of a few."

Even after writing this she hesitated again before enclosing it, and looked with an expression of piteous doubt at a crucifix which she had set on the table before her, writing the letter at its foot. "He will know—I am sure he will know—from whom it comes," she thought; "and if he should misjudge and think it is my father against whom I am warning him—" She paused and her head drooped forward on the paper. It seemed to her at that moment impossible to send the letter. She thought of her father sleeping tranquilly near by while she wrote to his enemy, to one who might seize the opportunity to think the worst of him!

But as she thought this the face of the vicomte rose before her—the noble lines, the kind, dark eyes—and she felt that she might safely trust the justice and generosity which looked from that face. "But if it were otherwise, if I knew that he would misjudge, have I the right to hold back a warning that may save his life?" she said to herself. And then her last

hesitation was over. She folded, addressed, sealed, and stamped the letter, and, placing it under her pillow, lay down again.

Not to sleep, however. She felt as if she could never sleep again, so strained and acute were all her senses. And then it was necessary to decide how she could post her letter, since they were to start so early in the morning. To go out herself at such an hour would be too extraordinary and would certainly excite her father's suspicion; yet she was determined not to entrust the letter to any one else. She thought of a dozen plans, only to discard each one; and when at last the sound of a clock chiming four told her that it was time to rise she had found no practical solution of the difficulty.

But Heaven came to her assistance. Her father was late for breakfast, and while she waited, conscious of the letter in her pocket more than of anything else, and still feverishly debating with herself how she could mail it, he entered with a key on his outstretched palm.

"See!" he said hastily, "I have broken the key of my portmanteau and cannot lock it. It is most unfortunate, for I must hurry out and try to find another, though I doubt whether any shop is open at this hour."

"O *mon père!* let me go for you," cried Armine eagerly, seeing in this her opportunity. "I have taken my breakfast, and while you take yours I can run to the shop of the watchmaker in the next street, so there will be no time lost."

"But you cannot go alone?" said her father, hesitating, while she eagerly extended her hand.

"Of course not. I will take Marie"—that was the housemaid—"and we can go and return while you drink your coffee."

He glanced at the *pendule*; there was indeed no time to lose. "*Eh bien*, go then," he said. "It will be best; but do not delay if the shop is not open."

Trembling with excitement and hardly believing her good fortune, Armine left the room, called Marie, and ran down the street, followed by the astonished maid with her white cap-strings fluttering. There were but few persons abroad, few windows open. The narrow street lay all in cool shadow, only on one side the top of the tall houses were touched with light. Armine turned a corner and saw the watchmaker's shop, from the windows of which a boy was deliberately taking down the shutters. But it was not on this that her eager attention was fixed, but on a tobacconist's shop two doors

beyond. There was a letter-box which had been before her mental vision all night, and which she had vainly endeavored to find some excuse for reaching. Now the matter was taken out of her hand, the opportunity was made for her without need of excuse. She felt almost awed by such a fulfilment of her desire as she walked up to the narrow slit, drew the letter from her pocket, and dropped it in.

The morning at Marigny was radiant with light and color, and sparkling with freshness, when the vicomte stepped out of the room where he had taken his solitary breakfast, and, lighting a cigar, walked slowly along the terrace, followed by two handsome dogs.

The green alleys of the park stretched below full of shadows; the old garden, though much neglected, was like a picture with its flowers and fruit-trees fresh with dew and set between old stone walls; while, looking over this garden, there was from the terrace a glimpse of the sea—of the blue, flashing, horizon-line of water afar—and the fragrance of flowers was mingled with the salt breath of the great deep.

But the vicomte had not come out on the terrace for the view, well as he knew and loved it, but because he had seen from the window of the breakfast-room a figure advancing up the avenue, and he knew that it was a messenger with the morning mail. He met the man at the head of the steps, received the bag from him, and, going to a shaded seat, established himself to open it at his leisure, the dogs placing themselves attentively on each side of him, as if expecting a share of the budget.

It was a large and sufficiently varied one. Numbers of newspapers, and letters of various sizes and shapes, tumbled out in a miscellaneous heap, which M. de Marigny proceeded to glance over, opening some and throwing others carelessly aside for later inspection. Among the latter was a letter which, as it lay there in the warm, bright sunlight, told no tales of the midnight when it was written, or of the early morning when with trepidation and difficulty it had been posted in the quaint old street of the district town.

But after he had finished reading a letter from Paris the vicomte took up and opened this with its unknown superscription. The few lines of writing which it contained were all on one page, and he observed with a sense of surprise that there was no signature. Then his glance turned to the open-

ing, "M. le Vicomte," and he read the simple words which Armine had traced under the influence of such strong feeling.

As she had felt sure, he knew at once from whom they came. There was not even an instant's doubt in his mind. He could see the pathetic eyes, he could hear the pathetic voice, and, if he had doubted for a moment, the appeal that he "would do injustice to no one" would have convinced him who the writer was. Who, indeed, could it be but the Socialist's daughter, to whom he had shown a little courtesy, and who thus put out her hand with a warning which might save his life?

But as he sat gazing at it, for how long a time he did not know, it was not of the danger which it revealed nor of the probable consequences to himself that he thought, but of the nature which these few lines so clearly indicated. He had felt its charm, the strong spell of its sympathy, from the first moment that he met the wonderful eyes that seemed looking at him now from the page on which *his* were fastened; but he had hardly been prepared for all that was revealed to him here. For he was himself possessed of the finest form of sympathy, and with its intuition he felt all that Armine had passed through. Where a coarser nature would have misunderstood, he read with perfect accuracy every phase of feeling, even to the fear that had half-deterred her—the fear lest her father should be misjudged through her act.

Presently he rose. Even yet he had not thought of himself at all. Threats and hints of personal danger had come to his ears before this, but he had not heeded them in the least, possessing a constitutional fearlessness which made it difficult for him to take account of such danger. Now, as he walked along the terrace, with the glad earth and the shining sea before his eyes, he was still thinking of the hand which had sent him the message rather than of the message itself; of the brave heart, the loyal nature, and of the face that only yesterday had looked at him with a gaze as wistful and appealing as the last words of this brief letter.

CHAPTER XXII.

"I WONDER," said D'Antignac one morning, "how our poor little Armine comes on."

"I have thought of her often lately," said Hélène, who was moving about the room putting things in order so quietly and deftly that it was only by the results any one would have perceived what she was about. "I should like to hear something of her."

"Gaston writes that her father is most energetic in stimulating opposition to him," said D'Antignac; "so I suppose we shall not hear from her till the election is over."

"Why should we hear from her then?"

"I did not mean that we should exactly hear from her, but rather that we should see her, for Duchesne will no doubt return to Paris."

"I suppose so," said Mlle. d'Antignac. "I hope it is not sinful," she added after a moment, during which she had taken down a small statuette from its bracket, dusted and replaced it, "but I cannot help thinking what a good thing it would be if M. Duchesne should be blown up, metaphorically at least, by some of his revolutionary schemes, and Armine could be free."

"It would be a desolate freedom, I am afraid," said D'Antignac. "As far as I know, her father is her only relative, and she is certainly very much attached to him."

"But she could order her life as it pleased her then, and not be transported from one part of Europe to another by every political wind."

"Order her life as it pleased her!" repeated D'Antignac in a musing tone. "There are few of us who are able to do that, and fewer still who, if we had the power, would find it easy to do. To please ourselves is, perhaps, as difficult a task as could be set us in this world, and to know what is best for us simply impossible. The safe path, therefore, is the path of God's providence. It is the A B C of religion that the graces which we receive and the merits we may obtain in the state and circumstances of life to which it has pleased him to call us are greater than we could obtain by leaving that path, even for one of apparently higher perfection."

"Yes," said Hélène, "I know that, and I was not wishing Armine to leave the path which is so rough, I am sure, to her

feet; I was only wishing that she might be released from the necessity of following it. But, after all, such wishes are very foolish, a part of the littleness that besets us in our poor human horizon." Then, with a start, "There is the door-bell! I hope Cesco will not think of admitting any one."

"It is too early for visitors," said D'Antignac.

But this proved to be a mistake, for a moment later Cesco opened the door and said: "Mlle. Duchesne begs to know if she may come in."

"Armine!" cried Hélène. "Yes, certainly. My dear child," she went on eagerly, advancing to meet the girl who appeared in the door, "this is a most unexpected pleasure."

"Almost as unexpected to me as to you, dear Mlle. d'Antignac," said Armine, kissing her in the pretty foreign fashion on both cheeks. "I am so glad to see you again! And M. d'Antignac—how is he?"

"He will tell you himself," said Hélène, leading her forward.

D'Antignac raised himself—the only exertion of which he was capable unaided—to a sitting posture, and held out his hands, saying:

"*'On parle de soleil, et en voici les rayons'!* We were just talking of you and wishing for news of you."

"Were you, indeed?" said Armine. "How good of you to think of me! O M. d'Antignac, how I have longed for a word from you!"

"You shall have as many now as you like," he answered, smiling. "But the first must be to say that Brittany has not done you much good. You are looking paler and thinner than when you went away."

"Am I? It is likely," she said. "No, Brittany did me no good. I wish I could have stayed in Paris."

"We have wished so, too," said Hélène kindly. "When did you return?"

"Last night," she answered. "You might be sure that it was lately; that this is the first place to which I have come. I longed to come earlier, but feared to disturb you. I felt, until I entered your door, as if I could hardly be certain of seeing you."

"But why?" asked Mlle. d'Antignac, smiling a little. "You surely did not think us likely to have vanished in a fortnight?"

"Oh! no," the girl answered; "but I did not know that my

father might not forbid my coming, and, though I should have disobeyed him in order to see you again, I was glad not to have been forced to do so."

The brother and sister exchanged a glance. Then the former said: "What has happened? Why should you fear that he would forbid your coming?"

"Because he has already done so by implication," she answered; "and although he left the matter there for the time being, I do not think it will end there. Some change has come over him. He, who was so kind, so tolerant, has become—no, I will not say unkind: he is never that when he remembers himself—but certainly very intolerant. As I have often told you, if he knew that I did not think with him he ignored the difference; but the time has come when he ignores it no longer. It angers him, and he seems to have conceived the resolution to make me believe all that he believes and hope what he hopes."

"And do you know why he has so suddenly conceived this resolution?" asked D'Antignac.

She shook her head. "No," she answered. "There is only one thing which suggests an explanation, but that is incredible."

"The thing which seems incredible is often the thing which is true," said D'Antignac.

She did not answer for a moment. Then she said: "I scarcely believe you will think so when you hear what this is; but it is easily told."

Nevertheless she paused again, and the blood rose in her clear, pale cheeks, though her glance did not waver or turn from him as she went on:

"One day my father told me that he wanted me to go with him to Marigny—that is, to the village—and, though I tried to avoid it, I had no good excuse for refusing. So we went, and what I feared came about. I met the vicomte, and he spoke to me. I am sure that only his kindness made him do so, and he simply said a few courteous words; but my father saw us together and was very angry. I never saw him so angry before, and for the first time in my life he spoke to me as if he suspected me of something wrong. He asked where I had met M. de Marigny, and I told him. Then he said he understood why I had no sympathy with him; that he would tolerate no acquaintance with M. de Marigny, and that I should go no more where I was likely to meet him. This terrified me, but I hoped that he spoke in haste and would forget it, especially

when I told him that I had met M. de Marigny only twice in all the time that I have been coming here. But from that day he is changed. He has said nothing more of the meeting with the vicomte; but he dwells bitterly on what he never seemed to think of before—my want of sympathy with his objects in life; and only last night he told me again that he intended to withdraw me entirely from influences 'that have been so pernicious.' I knew what that meant, and my heart died within me. It means that I shall come here no more. I trembled lest he should plainly say, 'Do not go again.' He did not say it *then*, but I know that he will, or else he will send me from Paris. He has spoken of that. In any case I see nothing but separation from you."

Her eyes filled with tears; her voice trembled and broke down. The bitterness of the separation seemed already pressing upon her. Mlle. d'Antignac rose impulsively, and, going over, placed her arm around her. "My poor Armine," she said, "life is indeed hard for you! But be patient; let us hope your father's anger will pass, and that he will prove more reasonable than to do what you fear."

"It is not merely anger," said Armine. "If it were it would pass; indeed, it would be already passed. He does not seem angry now; he seems only to feel a deep sense of injury that I am so alienated from him in sympathy, and to fancy that I am a piece of wax to be moulded by whatever influence is nearest me."

Meanwhile D'Antignac, lying back on his pillows, said nothing; but his grave, dark eyes, which were fastened on the girl, were as full of tenderness as of penetrating thoughtfulness. There was infinite comfort in this gaze, Armine felt when she met it, as she looked at him and went on:

"Now you see why I said that the only apparent reason for the change in my father is one which seems incredible. It dates apparently from the day when he saw me speak to M. de Marigny; and although that might have angered him—as I felt that it would—it is impossible to conceive that it could change his whole conduct toward me, that it could make of importance what never appeared to be worth a thought to him before."

"You remember what I said a few minutes ago," D'Antignac answered. "What seems to us incredible is often the thing which is true. I fear there can be no doubt that your father's change of feeling and conduct does spring from that occurrence, simple and trivial as it looks."

"But it is impossible! I cannot believe it!" said the girl. "My father is a man of sense. He must have realized, when he came to think, that the meeting was nothing—a mere accident. And what is M. de Marigny to him but a political opponent?"

D'Antignac did not reply, "M. de Marigny is much more to him than a political opponent," but after a pause he said: "We cannot possibly tell all the motives that may influence your father. He may have been gradually rousing to a sense of the differences that divide you, and the final realization probably came when he saw you in friendly intercourse with a man against whom he was just then peculiarly embittered, as most men are against their political opponents when that thing most fatal to charity, a heated contest, is going on. You are certainly aware that it requires very little flame to kindle a large fire."

There was silence again for a moment. Armine sat with her eyes growing momentarily more sorrowful. Presently, with a deep sigh, she said: "I dreaded to go to Marigny! I felt instinctively that harm would come of it. But I did not dream of anything so bad as this—the prospect of being separated from you."

"I am sorry from the bottom of my heart that you ever met Gaston de Marigny here," said Hélène, who was still standing beside her, with one hand resting on her shoulder.

"I am sorry, too," said D'Antignac; "but regret is quite unavailing, and in a certain sense unnecessary, since we had nothing whatever to do with bringing either him or Armine here on the occasions when they met. It was a natural accident, rising from our acquaintance with both."

"Oh!" said Armine quickly, "do not think that I blame any one. It was only a natural accident, but how could you think—what I could never have believed—that my father would object to such a meeting? I should not have imagined that M. de Marigny was more to him than a name; and if any one had suggested that he would not wish me to meet him on account of his politics, I would have said: 'You do my father injustice. He is an enthusiast, but not a fanatic. Because he wishes to abolish the order to which a man belongs he would not refuse to meet that man in social life.' But it seems I was wrong," she added, her voice falling from the proud tone which it had involuntarily taken, as she uttered the last words.

"No, my dear Armine," said D'Antignac, "you were not wrong. Your father, no doubt, would have felt in that way of any other man than the Vicomte de Marigny. But there are reasons—reasons which go beyond the present generation—for his disliking the vicomte personally; and this dislike was naturally intensified by the political contest. As for his injured sense of your lack of sympathy—well, it is hard for a man to find contradiction and want of belief in those nearest to him, especially those (like wife and daughter) who, he thinks, should instinctively look up to and receive their ideas from him. Remember that always with regard to the differences of opinion between you, and say little. It is quite true that the law, 'Honor thy father,' rests on no authority commanding *his* respect, but it commands yours, and must be obeyed."

"I do not think," said Armine, "that my father himself would say that I have ever failed to obey it."

"I am sure that you have not," D'Antignac answered. "But you must not begin to do so. You said a little while ago that even if he had forbidden you in distinct terms to come to us you would nevertheless have come. That was not right. Only when a duty to God conflicts with the command of a parent may the last be set at naught. Now, there was no duty involved in your coming here."

"Yes," said the girl impetuously, "there was. For have I not learned here that there is such a thing *as* duty; that it is not a mere term, signifying nothing, which every man may use to suit himself? And where should I go to learn what *is* that duty, if I did not come here? You are my conscience, M. d'Antignac. Surely you must know that."

"If I am," said D'Antignac in a voice of gravity, but also of exceeding gentleness, "there is the more reason that I should speak plainly, and that I should say then it is well that, at any cost of pain to either of us, our association should be broken off, for a time at least. It is well that you should learn, in a spiritual sense, to stand alone; and that, for such guidance as we all need, you should go to one better fitted than I to give it. I have been to you all that it is necessary or fitting that I should be. It is not fitting that I should direct your conscience, or that you should find in me a substitute for the aids of that religion which you hesitate to embrace, and with regard to which I am bound to remind you that God's commands are not to be set aside for any fear of man. 'I am come not to send

peace upon earth, but a sword,' said our Lord; and that sword has pierced many hearts before yours."

As he spoke—his tones growing gentler yet more impressive with every word—the girl gazed at him like one who hangs upon the lips of an oracle, with the whole being absorbed in the act of listening. When he ceased there was a silence which seemed long, until she said in a low voice:

"One's own heart does not matter. But to pierce another's—that is hard."

"Do you think that is not included in the saying?" asked D'Antignac. "To a sensitive soul the pain which it costs to inflict pain is greater than any that can be inflicted. But therein lies the cross. And the hearts which are pierced—how do we know what waters may not flow from them at last? Yet even if they remain closed to the end let us beware how we put the love, any more than the fear, of man between us and the command of God."

Armine bent her face into her hands. "It seems to me that you are hard upon me—very hard, M. d'Antignac," she said. "You tell me that I must obey my father and come to you no more. Yet you also tell me that I must do that which will be in his eyes the worst offence which I could commit, which will make him regard me as a traitor and an enemy."

"Have I seemed hard to you, my poor Armine?" D'Antignac asked with the same infinite gentleness. "Well, it is simply this: I have spoken to you as to one who is strong enough to do what is right. I grant you that courage is needed; but what then? Souls as tender, frames as weak as yours have possessed it. And when you called me your conscience you put a responsibility upon me. After that I could not be silent."

"Do you think that I wish you to be silent?" Armine asked. "Oh! no; I am glad that you have spoken, though what you put before me is very hard, and I may not have the courage and strength it demands. Will you despise me if I prove *not* to have them?"

"No, I shall not despise you, but I shall think that you make a great mistake," D'Antignac answered. "You will weigh in a balance obeying God or paining your father; and to avoid the last you will neglect the first. But do you ever think that you may be frustrating God's intentions towards you in some manner which concerns not only yourself but others? In the great economy of grace we cannot tell how one soul may act upon

another, or what it is intended to supply. *You* may be intended to make reparation by your faith for your father's war against religion; by your courage in confessing, for his bitterness in denying; to atone by prayers for blasphemies, and by good works for evil deeds. At least we know that such reparation is possible."

"Is it?" said the girl. A sudden light came into her face. It was evident that D'Antignac had touched a chord which responded like an electric flash. "If I thought that," she went on in a low tone—"if I believed it possible that *I* could ever make reparation for the things of which you speak—I think it would cost me little effort to face any opposition."

"It is entirely possible that you should make it, and it may be the special work which God demands of you," D'Antignac replied. "But on such a point I speak with diffidence. Again I say, you must go to one better able to direct you."

"Ah! I shall never find one better able," she said with a little cry. "But if I must leave you—if you bid me not come back to you—I will go to whomever you wish."

"Do you mean that you will go to a priest?" he asked, regarding her searchingly; for up to this time she had always shrunk from such a decisive step.

"Yes, if you think that I should—that I ought," she answered like one in despair.

"I am sure that you should, and I think that you ought; that the time has come when you must act," he replied. "I will give you a note to a priest whom I know well, who is at once ardent and wise; who will know what is best for you, yet who will not press you. He is for the present attached to Notre Dame des Victoires, where you will find him when you wish to deliver what I shall give you. Hélène, will you hand me my writing-desk?"

"O M. d'Antignac, pray do not write now!" cried Armine before Hélène could move. "You must be tired, for I have made you talk so much! I will come back for the note. It will give me the happiness of thinking that *I may* come back!"

"But if your father forbids you to come?" asked D'Antignac.

"Then I can send Madelon. But I do not feel it possible that I can be exiled from this room, which has been my haven of peace, my refuge of safety, for so long!"

"Nevertheless," said D'Antignac gravely, "you may be so exiled. And if your father does forbid you to return I do

not wish you to have the temptation of thinking, 'I will go for the note,' nor yet do I wish to run the risk of any accident in its reaching you. It need not be long; a few lines will be enough—merely to introduce you. I will write another letter explaining your circumstances. Hélène, my desk."

Hélène was ready with the desk—a very light and convenient affair, which could be easily placed before him—and he wrote a few lines, which he enclosed, addressed, and gave to Armine. Then he lay back on his pillows with an air of weariness, while Hélène quickly removed the desk and brought him a dose of medicine.

Armine waited until he had taken this, and then said in a low voice: "I think I had better go now."

Yet it was pathetic to see the struggle she had to nerve herself to the point of departure even after she rose to her feet. She looked around, and her eyes filled with tears that threatened to overflow. But controlling herself with a strong effort, she went to the side of the couch and said hastily:

"Adieu, M. d'Antignac! Thank you a thousand times for all your kindness. I will come back—when I can."

"We shall look and pray for thy coming, *ma sœur*," said D'Antignac tenderly, as he took the hand she offered in both his own. "God grant that it may be soon; but, whether soon or late, may he go with thee and strengthen and bless thee for ever!"

A minute later, when Armine with tears bade farewell to Mlle. d'Antignac in the ante-chamber, her last words were:

"I feel like one thrust out of Paradise!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"AND where now, mademoiselle?" asked Madelon when she joined Armine at the foot of the staircase and they issued together from the *porte-cochère*.

Armine did not answer for a moment. Indeed it had been her evident hesitation in turning homeward which impelled Madelon to ask the question. They stood in the shadow of the archway for an instant; then the girl said:

"Do you remember, Madelon, when we used to live in the Rue de Vaugirard, how I loved the Luxembourg Garden? I have not been there in such a long time, and I feel just now as if I should like to see it again. Let us go there. At this time of day there will be few people about, and I can find one

of my old haunts to be quiet in, while you go to see your cousin, who lives near by."

"You are very good, mademoiselle," said Madelon, "and I should like to see my cousin, who has not been well of late; but to leave you alone in a public place—that is not possible."

"Well, we will go and walk through the garden, and afterwards, perhaps, I will go with you to your cousin's," said Armine, who knew that she generally had her own way in the end.

So they turned from the river, passed through the quarter of the Faubourg St. Germain with its stately hotels of the old nobility, and, presently reaching the boulevard of the same name, found themselves near the old abbey church of St. Germain des Prés.

Of the hurrying multitude that pours by this ancient and most interesting sanctuary there are probably few who give a thought to the panorama of French history which it has power to unroll to the mind's eye. Yet it stands as a witness and relic of that Christian civilization which has made France. Here, in the dawn of the light which was to wax so brilliant, Childebert, son of Clovis, founded the monastery and church in which his body rested for many centuries. To the student of mediæval history the fame of that great monastery, with its splendid domain and seignorial rights, is very familiar; but even such a student, looking at its surroundings to-day, must find it difficult to draw the picture of "that abbatial palace where the bishops of Paris deemed themselves fortunate to be entertained for a night; that refectory to which the architect had given the air, the beauty, and the splendid window of a cathedral; that elegant chapel of the Virgin, that noble dormitory, those spacious gardens, that portcullis, that drawbridge, that girdle of battlements cut out to the eye upon the green-sward of the surrounding fields, those courts where men-at-arms glistened among copes of gold—the whole collected and grouped around three lofty spires with circular arches, firmly seated upon a Gothic choir, forming a magnificent object against the horizon."*

So the ages of faith saw St. Germain des Prés, and so, with certain changes, it remained until the sacrilegious hand of the Revolution fell upon it, suppressing, confiscating, and (with a fine sense of the fitness of things!) converting the abbot's palace into a saltpetre manufactory, where an explo-

* Victor Hugo.

sion occurred which destroyed the matchless refectory and valuable library. Afterward the work of destruction went on with celerity; for an age which is powerless to construct knows well how to destroy. Streets of houses without an architectural idea have been opened through the noble buildings, of which hardly a trace now remains to delight the antiquary. Not even the chapel of Notre Dame, built by Pierre de Montreuil in the thirteenth century, and famed as one of the most exquisite pieces of architecture of an age which covered Europe with glorious cathedrals and erected, by the hands of the same architect, the Sainte Chapelle, has been spared. The ancient church alone stands—as it was rebuilt by the Abbot Morardus in the tenth century, after the Normans had destroyed the older church—looking upon a new and strange world: a world from which all sense of the beautiful, as of the elevated, seems to have departed; a world intent only on sordid gain or ignoble pleasure; a world that in severing itself from the deep roots of the past destroys its hope of a future, and where the light which Clovis and Childebert kindled wanes more and more dim. Around these old walls the glowing, picturesque life of the middle ages, with its genius, its passion, and its ardent faith, bringing heaven down to earth, has swept, and passed, to give place to a narrow, dull, material life, which refuses to look up to where glory still shines in the clouds, but, with a strange infatuation without parallel in the history of mankind, seeks the secret, the motive, the end of existence in the dust beneath its feet.

But under this antique porch, with its square-buttressed tower, all the great past of France seems to meet those who still hold that past worthy of honor. An innumerable host, stretching back through the ages, of kings, cardinals, prelates, scholars, and saints, have crossed this threshold and passed under the lofty arches of the nave to adore upon the altar the same Sacramental Presence before which Clovis bent his pagan knee and rose up the first of Christian kings. Armine, when she saw before her the venerable, well-known walls, said to Madelon: “Ah! there is St. Germain des Prés. Let us go in for a few minutes.” And when they entered the subdued light of the beautiful interior, rich with splendid color, proved grateful to eyes fresh from dazzling sunlight striking on asphalt pavements. All was steeped in quiet—the ineffable quiet which broods in the sanctuary as in no other spot of earth; a quiet in which it seems as if by listening intently one

might almost hear the rustling of angel-wings around the tabernacle where dwells our hidden Lord. A few figures were kneeling here and there. In the nave stood a man with the appearance of an artist, studying intently those frescoes of Flandrin, to which no higher praise can be given than that in their beauty and devotional feeling they are worthy to be placed above those Roman arches which date back to the time of the Abbot Morardus.

Armine passed with her companion up the nave and knelt before the high altar. At that altar past and present met, as they meet in eternity before Him who is unchanging, "yesterday, to-day, and for ever." On a line with her as she knelt was, on one side, the chapel containing the marble figure of Casimir, king of Poland, who died abbot of the monastery, kneeling on his tomb and offering up his crown to God; on the other the chapel of St. Marguerite, adjoining which is the chapel in which James, Duke of Douglas, lies, his sculptured figure reclining on his tomb. Armine saw these things almost without seeing them; but they entered into and made part of what she was feeling. The king who had surrendered all things to follow Christ, though dead yet spoke to her, as did the soldier of a warlike age whose dust lay in the quiet keeping of that church which he had not followed his unhappy country in forsaking. But deeper and more penetrating than these was the voice which from the still depths of the tabernacle seemed saying to her soul: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." To these grave and terrible words what voice of earth can add weight? From them what appeal is there when the moment of final choice comes? When Armine rose at length to leave the church where these words had been, as it were, spoken to her, she felt as if hesitation were no longer possible, as if she had now only to nerve herself to action.

Again in the streets, they walked toward the Luxembourg and soon entered the garden by the Rue de Vaugirard. As Armine had said, it was not an hour when loiterers abound in its pleasant shades, and most of the seats under the spreading chestnuts were unoccupied. The girl gazed around her lovingly. How well she knew the long arcades, the spacious, stately terraces with their statues and great flights of steps descending to the parterre gay with flowers and the rainbow spray of flashing fountains! It had been the dreaming-place of her early youth, when from the study of history she had

come here to see its figures move before her imagination—princes and courtiers and great ladies with manners and bearing of infinite grace. The marble queens of France who look serenely, and perhaps a little disdainfully, from their pedestals at the *bourgeois* throng that ebbs and flows through scenes fit only for a court were like old friends to her, and she knew every nook musical with the voice of water.

Toward one of these nooks she made her way, turning to the left and following a path that led to a spot where art had endeavored to imitate nature, where a fountain burst out of rock and fell into a great brimming basin edged with ferns, the boughs of trees arched overhead, forming a shade deep, green, and delicious. Under this shade, by the side of the fountain, a seat was placed; and here Armine sat down.

"Now, my good Madelon," she said persuadingly, "you see what a quiet place this is. No one is at all likely to trouble me by coming here; so you can with a clear conscience leave me for a little while, and go to see your cousin, who I know lives very near."

"Oh! yes, mademoiselle; only a step away in the Rue Soufflot," said Madelon, and then stopped. She was much tempted, being not often able to see this cousin, who kept a small shop in the neighborhood; but her sense of responsibility was strong. She did not really fear harm or insult for Armine if left alone, but her pride would have been wounded if the girl had been seen unattended by any one who knew her. There was apparently little prospect of such a thing here, however, so she finally consented to go, promising to return very soon, and exacting from Armine a promise that she would not stir until that return.

Armine had no desire to do so. The quiet was delightful to her, and as she listened to Madelon's receding steps she drew a deep sigh of relief and pleasure. For to those who are able to enjoy it there is nothing more refreshing to soul and body than solitude. It is like an invigorating bath to the mind tired of society, of the trivialities which make up most conversation, of the effort necessary to preserve that appearance of interest essential to good breeding, and also to the mind fatigued in the less common way by too much stimulation. Armine did not live enough in society to be conscious of either form of weariness; but all meditative natures spend their happiest hours alone. Poets, artists of all kinds, thinkers, and saints belong to this class. "The light

that never was on sea or land" shines for them at such times and peoples solitude with glorious images. Armine, with her sad heart and troubled mind, would have been amazed to be told that she was of the stuff of which these dreamers are made; but no one who looked at her with an appreciative regard could doubt it. As she sat now by the brimming basin, in the softly flickering shade, with her clear, deep, wistful eyes, she looked like the ideal of one to whom such glory might be revealed.

This, at least, was the thought of a young man, who flattered himself that he was very appreciative, when he suddenly came in sight of her. She did not hear his footstep, and for a moment he paused regarding the charming picture which she made. Then he came forward, and with a start she looked up and recognized him.

"Mlle. Duchesne," he said, "this is a delightful surprise! I did not know that you were in Paris."

"I have not been in Paris much more than twelve hours, M. Egerton," she answered. "We returned—my father and I—last night from Brittany."

"And it is my good fortune to meet you to-day!" said Egerton. "I am certainly very much indebted to the chance which has brought me here."

"It seems rather a singular chance," said Armine, "for I remember that you were one of the last of our acquaintances whom I saw before I left Paris. And now you are one of the first whom I meet on my return! You seem likely to be met in very unlikely places, monsieur."

"But the Garden of the Luxembourg is not an unlikely place," he said. "Any one might be here."

"Not any one who lives on the other side of the Seine," she answered. "In the Champs Elysées, now, I should have thought it natural to meet you; but here you are out of your orbit."

"As much as I was in the Madeleine?" he asked, smiling. "But there is this difference: I was drawn into the Madeleine by the contagion of your example, while no such contagion drew me here, for I had no idea of seeing you."

"Of course not; how could you have had?" she said quickly.

"Yet, all the same, it is remarkable," he went on. "That I should come over here to see a friend, who proved not to be at home—who never is at home, by the bye; then that I should

stroll into the Luxembourg to look at the pictures, and that finally I should wander down to this quiet spot and find *you*—if it is only a bit of accidental good fortune, I can only say that it reconciles me to some accidents which are not fortunate. And now, mademoiselle, am I intruding upon you? Shall I go away? Or will you permit me to sit down and talk to you for a little while?"

His manner was so frank and so respectful that Armine hesitated for a moment before replying. She was aware that, according to French usage, such a tête-à-tête was inadmissible; but Egerton was a foreigner, belonging to a nation with different social rules. She had an instinctive sense that she might trust him not to presume in any way upon her permission, if she gave it; and, more than that, she felt a revival of her interest in him, and a sense as if this meeting was not due merely to chance. So she answered:

"You do not intrude, for I have no right to monopolize this place. It is simply an old haunt of mine, where I insisted that Madelon should leave me while she went to pay a visit near by. I did not think it probable that any one would disturb my solitude. That does not mean, however, that you need go away, if you care to stay."

"Of that there can be no doubt," he replied. And, having remained standing up to this time, he now sat down on the bench near her.

"It is a beautiful place," he said, glancing around, "and you looked, when I saw you first, as if you were indeed at home in it. Yet, according to the rule which you laid down awhile ago, you should be out of your orbit here as much as I."

"Oh! no," she said, smiling a little, "for five or six years ago we lived very near here, and the garden is as familiar to me as possible. That is why I spoke of this spot as an old haunt of mine. While Madelon would gossip with her friends on the terrace, I used to come down here and dream."

"It seems made for dreaming," said Egerton. "And that you came here for such a purpose explains why I thought, as I first caught sight of you, that you looked like a sibyl seeking inspiration."

"Did you think that?" she said, with a glance of involuntary surprise. "Well, I am not a sibyl, but when you saw me I *was* seeking inspiration. Only it was a different inspiration from that which you probably mean."

"I don't know," he answered. "The inspiration which I

mean dealt with the deepest questions of life; and there can be no deep question in life which does not reach beyond it. Now, the sibyls looked into the dread secrets of that which lies beyond, and spoke with the voice of the gods. I cannot tell, of course," he added after a moment's pause, "what form of inspiration you were seeking; but to say that you looked like a sibyl means more—much more—than to say that you looked like a muse."

"It is very extravagant to say that I looked like either," she observed quietly. "But the inspiration which I was seeking was on a question stretching beyond this life. For you are right in saying that there can be no great question which ends here."

"And yet," he said slowly, "I wonder if you know what it is to be assailed constantly with the doubt whether all things do *not* end here—whether whatever seems to go beyond is not merely a vain dream or a baseless hope?"

She looked at him for an instant without replying; then she said:

"Yes, I have known what it is not only to be assailed by such a doubt, but to live in it. The belief that all things do end here is the belief in which I was educated; but I found it as difficult to believe that as you find it to believe in another life. My mind revolted against a creed so narrow and so blind, and I felt, what I read long after on an inspired page, 'If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.'"

"Miserable—yes," he said. "But what then? A man cannot believe a doctrine simply because it would be comfortable and consoling. And to a man of this generation, who breathes the air of his generation and keeps pace with its mental advance, faith has become well-nigh impossible. I grant that the most of us had not much to begin with—a few shreds of Christian hope and belief which were handed down to us after having been subjected to various eliminating processes, and had little to distinguish them from barest rationalism. When put to the test of logic could such faith as that stand? Ignorance is its only safeguard; and however much ignorance may be bliss, one hardly cares to indulge it in connection with this momentous subject. So one goes on, opening one's mind to conclusions and opinions of the time, and when at last an hour comes with some need for faith one puts out one's hand—to seize a wreath of mist, a vapor unsubstantial as a dream."

"And is that what you feel? Is that your position?" asked Armine, her eyes full of interest.

"That is undoubtedly my position," he answered. "I am blamed by my friends for having no earnestness of convictions, no depth of feeling on any subject. Men like D'Antignac on one side, and your father on the other, regard me with scorn and impatience; yet to believe with the one I find as impossible as to feel with the other without belief."

"I am sure," said Armine, "you are wrong when you speak of M. d'Antignac as regarding you with 'scorn and impatience.' I do not think it would be possible for him to regard any one with such a feeling as that—certainly not one of whom I have heard him speak as kindly as of yourself. And if you find it impossible to believe what he does, that is probably because you do not know *why* he believes. Even in my slight experience I have found that men are chiefly sceptical because they are ignorant."

Egerton smiled. "The world generally regards the converse of the proposition as true," he said. "And yet, in a measure, you are right: many men who turn to scepticism are profoundly ignorant of the claims of religion upon their reason. They grasp eagerly the wider freedom which unbelief offers, and the faith they demolish is a thing of straw set up by themselves. But I do not belong to this class. Unbelief has no charms for me. I have tested all that it offers to compensate for what it takes away, and I have found all hollow and unsatisfying. How can it be otherwise? For when men tell us that we have no souls to save and no God to serve, they drag down our whole conception of life, its meaning and its duty. What does a man who denies God mean by talking to me of duty? Have not I as good a right as he to my conception of it—which may be that of the most consummate selfishness? As for the welfare of humanity, why should I care what becomes of a few units in the infinite mass of succeeding generations, which crawl here for a little while in wretchedness and then go down to nothingness? No; if the day comes when the last gleam of blue sky—the last hope of immortality—is lost to me, Schopenhauer will be my prophet, and I shall believe that if a man can be said to have a duty it will be that of aiding as far as possible in the extinction of this misery-cursed humanity."

In the earnestness of his feeling he had almost forgotten to whom he spoke, but the girl who listened had understand-

ing as well as sympathy for him. Over the ground where he was wandering her feet had already passed, and from where she stood, at the gate of the city builded upon a rock, she felt like stretching out a hand of succor to this wanderer in a world of shadows. But before she could decide what was best to say he spoke again:

"You must forgive me for the egotism into which I have been betrayed. I only intended, when I began speaking of myself, to make you understand what I mean in saying that if you have gained any inspiration, if you possess any sibylline secret bearing upon such a state, pray give me the benefit of it."

"I will most willingly," she said. "But in order to do so I think I will ask you first to endure a little egotism from *me*."

"I can ask nothing better," he answered eagerly.

But for a minute she was silent, and as she sat with her hands clasped together in her lap, and her eyes fastened on the brimming, flashing water in the gray, fern-clad basin, it seemed to Egerton that she was looking into the past as well as into the future, and her words, when she began to speak, proved that he was right.

"Perhaps you will think it strange," she said, "but as long ago as when I used to sit here—hardly more than a child or only passing out of childhood—such thoughts as you have described were present with me. It was singular, was it not, that I did not accept my father's opinions? But I could not. I suppose I had a questioning mind—at least I always found myself asking, 'Why? Why?' to the mystery of existence, to the riddle of history, to the crime and the infinite sorrow of life. These are dark problems, and I might not—probably I should not—have felt all their darkness and weight, if I had not heard the evils of the world talked of so constantly and their remedies so passionately advocated. But those remedies—how could I believe in them? How could revolutions unravel the mystery of life, or the establishment of communes end its sorrow? There was an unreal sound in the cries I heard, though I did not know *then* that the brotherhood of mankind has no meaning unless it rests on the fatherhood of God. But when men insisted that the human race only needs to be freed from 'superstition' and restraint to become great and good, I looked back over history and out on the world around us, and wondered where they found any warrant or ground for such a hope."

"There is none!" said Egerton quickly; for had not he, too,

heard the same cries and asked the same questions of history and of life? "But it seems almost incredible that you should have reached such conclusions alone and unassisted!"

"Why should it seem incredible?" she asked. "It seemed to me that the thing which taxed credulity was the existence of the world without God, and the belief that for all the manifold and terrible injustice of life there should be no redress, no compensation, no merit to be gained in suffering, no punishment for crime."

"It is an awful existence in which we find ourselves, if all those hopes are blotted out of it," he said. "But, as I remarked a moment ago, we can't shut our eyes to things because they are unpleasant."

"But you can shut them to other things," she said quietly, "because from them, as you think, the advancing thought of the world has turned away. So a man might close his eyes and refuse to believe that the sun shone at midday."

"Am I such a man?" he said. "I think not. I think I am willing to open my eyes. But you—surely during the time of which you speak you had some religious faith?"

She shook her head. "Not the least," she answered. "My mother had died early in my life, and the books upon which I was educated painted Christianity as the last and worst of the superstitions of mankind, a mere survival of ignorant myths. Yet, notwithstanding this, the idea of religion—little as I knew of it—had an attraction for me, as I presume it must have for every one who does not entirely stifle the spiritual side of nature."

"Yes," said Egerton, "I fancy that even the most hardened materialist must feel at times the longing and the impulse toward faith. But we are trained to distrust both that impulse and the attraction of which you speak."

"I know," she answered, "that we are trained to test everything by the scales and the crucible. Yet what is stronger proof than this universal *need* of the existence of that for which our natures so strongly crave? Let those who answer by talking of an inherited impulse tell us what other deeply-implanted instinct of man, found in all races, extending through all ages, has proved to be founded on a delusion."

The energy of her speech and the clearness of her thought moved Egerton's surprise more and more. Notwithstanding his interest in drawing her out, he had not expected to receive anything of value; but now he owned that the sibyl had a message for him.

"But you did not reach a final conclusion alone?" he asked presently.

"No," she replied; "I had a helping-hand. Is there not always a helping-hand for those who need and will take it? Mine was the hand of M. d'Antignac. I was attracted to him first by his suffering and the heroic patience with which that suffering was borne. Then I began to ask what was the secret of the wonderful calm in which he lived, that atmosphere—you know it—of peace that no storm can ruffle. The beauty of his faith thus dawned upon me first; the glory and majesty afterwards. When I began to speak to him of the difficulties and perplexities with which I was struggling, then—and not until then—he led me into the temple of faith and showed me how all creation finds meaning and harmony there." She paused an instant, and there was almost a rapt look in her eyes as she went on. "It was like a vision of the new Jerusalem," she said, "of a world reconciled to God. It was no longer a thing of chance and chaos, a mad pandemonium of crime and suffering: there was a motive and meaning to all. If men suffered, it was that through suffering they should rise to heights where suffering alone could lead them; and if they sinned, it was because God gave to the being he created free-will, in order that his service might be voluntary and possess merit. There is no merit in the service of a slave. Good and evil are placed before us, and God disdains to lay a fetter on our choice. But it is a choice for all eternity."

"How can you know that?" said Egerton.

"There is only one way by which we can know that or anything else," she answered. "By the voice of the church which is 'the pillar and ground,' the teacher and guide of truth."

"And you are, then, absolutely a Catholic?" said Egerton after a pause of some length.

She hesitated an instant, then said: "I have long been one in belief, but I have never openly confessed the faith, on account of my father, fearing his grief even more than his anger. It is terrible to wound one whom we love; and that will wound him very deeply. But it seems as if the time has come when I may no longer be a coward—when I must act and bear the consequences. I told you that I was seeking inspiration here. It was the inspiration necessary for such a step."

"But is it essential that you should take it?" asked Eger-

ton, startled; for he felt instinctively how terrible Duchesne's anger was likely to be.

"There is no compulsion but that of my own conscience," she answered. "That has been weak enough heretofore; but now—" She rose suddenly, for she saw Madelon coming down the path toward them. "I must go," she said; "and I fear that, after all, I have not been able to give you any help."

"On the contrary," he replied quickly, "you have said many words which I shall not soon forget. But this is not adieu; may I not come to see you?"

"You know that my father is always glad to see you," she answered gravely; "but I fear his influence for you."

"You are very kind to fear for me," he said; "but, with all his power and magnetism M. Duchesne has never been able, and I am quite sure never will be able, to rouse me to enthusiasm in his cause. I admire his devotion to that cause; but it is as you remarked a little while ago—one must believe in the fatherhood of God before one can acknowledge the brotherhood of man."

CHAPTER XXIV.

LEFT alone—after Armine had walked away with Madelon—Egerton sank back on the seat and began in his accustomed fashion to consider the interview just past. Characteristically, his mind dwelt most on the personality of Armine, which had been revealed to him in a clearer light than ever before. It was like a pathetic picture—the idea of the girl, at an age when most girls are free from care or thought, sitting by this fountain in the garden of the old palace, pondering the deep problems and weighing the fierce war-cries of the tumultuous age in which her lot was cast. Egerton had known, in a degree at least, how heavy the weight of the time can be to a soul which is unable to satisfy itself with the mere surface of life, with the pursuit of gain or of pleasure; but what was *his* realization of this compared to that of Armine? In her very childhood she had struggled with giants—those giants called Ideas, which had drenched France with blood and convulsed all Europe—and she had come victorious from the struggle. He could not forget the rapt look of her eyes when she said, "It was like a vision of the new Jerusalem—of a world reconciled with God." The look had struck him even more than the words, for it indicated an as-

surance beyond the power of expression. Nor could he think it a mere exaggeration of sentiment. The memory came back to him of a day when he had stood under the mighty arches of Notre Dame and listened to a voice which while he listened reconciled for him, too, this crime-darkened, suffering-steeped world with the gracious purpose of its Creator. He remembered how eloquently that voice had justified the ways of God with man, and made it clear that those who in their madness constitute themselves the critics and judges of God display in their arraignments an ignorance equal to that of a child who should fretfully declaim against the heat of the sun that ripens the wide harvests of the earth.

Since that day it had more and more dawned upon him that if an answer to the riddles of life was to be found at all it must be sought in that Catholic theology which modern philosophers ignore, while they seek in systems without a base what such systems can never give, and then fling them aside, crying: "We have tested this thing called revealed religion, and found it without a single reason for its existence worth the attention of a philosophical mind." A multitude follow their lead as blindly as another multitude followed, three hundred years ago, those who substituted human opinion for the voice of God and led the human mind into a quagmire of error where it has struggled ever since. And among this multitude Egerton might have remained but for—yes, he said to himself with something like a start of surprise, but for the voice of Armine. If he had made a long mental journey since the day when he stood before the great portal of Notre Dame, and thought complacently, yet with some strange yearning toward the repose of faith, that a man must belong to his age, it was to her voice that he owed the first impulse on that journey. How well he recalled the evening when he met her first, and when, amid the passionate utterances of the apostle of destruction, her simple words had made so deep an impression and sent him to D'Antignac as a questioner rather than merely as a friend!

Yes, it was to Armine he owed whatever light had come to him; and that being so, was it more than chance which had led his feet here to-day? "It is strange," he thought. "'The ways are many'—have I not seen that somewhere? A Socialist meeting was to me the vestibule to Notre Dame. And now, coming in very idleness to seek Winter, who first roused my curiosity with regard to Duchesne, I find a sibyl with a

message. Shall I ever heed it? God only knows. And yet if there be a God there can certainly be no duty higher than the duty of acknowledging him."

He rose, and, leaving the fountain, walked slowly along the *allée* which led to the broad terrace with its stately flights of steps descending to the parterre before the palace. Again he thought of Armine in her childhood and girlhood, of the poetic face and the clear, searching eyes, as she had wandered here, alone amid the *bourgeois* crowd, bearing already the penalty of isolation which all must bear whose mind or spirit elevates them above the multitude that surrounds them. What was to be the fate of this delicate creature—strong in mind, but sensitive as a mimosa in feeling—whom fate had placed where mind and heart were set so cruelly at variance? He felt his interest in her growing almost insistent in its demands, as if urging him to put out his hand to help her. But was it in his power to help? He knew that it was not; but he determined that at least he would know how it fared with her in the struggle, and that he would not lose the position in which her confidence and sympathy had placed him.

While thinking in this manner he had been walking toward one of the gates of the garden, and he now passed through into the Boulevard St. Michel, having before him the narrow streets and the steep hill of the Quartier Latin, when a hand fell on his shoulder, and, as once before in the same neighborhood, he was accosted by the man whom he had crossed the Seine to seek.

"So here you are!" said Winter. "I thought I should find you."

"How did you know that I was to be found?" asked Egerton, turning.

"Oh! the concierge, *chez moi*, told me that '*un monsieur bien distingué*' had been inquiring for me. So, judging it to be you, and judging also that, having nothing to occupy your time, you would be likely to stroll into the Luxembourg Garden—that is the benefit of having a palace for near neighbor—I decided to take a turn in search of you. *Et voilà!*"

He uttered the last words in a tone of satisfaction which Egerton felt unable to echo. His meeting with Armine had thrown him so entirely out of accord with Winter that it was only by an effort he could recall himself to the plane of the latter or remember why he had sought him. He had too much of the social faculty to suffer this to be apparent, how-

ever, and when Winter presently inquired concerning his immediate intentions he said :

"I was on my way home; but, now that we have met, the best thing to do would be to breakfast together. I presume that you know a good café in the neighborhood."

"I know half a dozen where you can get a better breakfast than in your gilded haunts on the Boulevard des Italiens," said Winter. "If you want to fare well in foreign towns you should avoid all places where strangers congregate. Their presence has always two effects—to increase prices and to deteriorate quality."

"Unhappily true," said Egerton; "so I put myself in your hands. Take me where our degrading influence is unknown."

Winter laughed, but proceeded to guide him to one of those cafés where students, artists, and journalists congregate, where the foreigner, unless he belongs to the Bohemian ranks, is unknown, and where one finds few mirrors and little gilding, but good service and distinctively French cooking.

The two men sat down at a small table, and, after they had ordered breakfast, Egerton looked around. "It strikes me," he said, "that I have been here before. Is not this the café where you found the man who so obligingly went with me to the meeting in Montmartre where I first saw Duchesne?"

"The same," Winter answered. "It is a great resort of Leroux's. I should not be surprised if he dropped in at any moment. If he did he might give us news of Duchesne, who has been out of Paris lately—"

"He is back in Paris now, however," said Egerton involuntarily.

"Indeed! Have you seen him?" inquired Winter.

"No," replied Egerton, slightly vexed with his own thoughtlessness and determined not to mention Armine; "I have only heard of his arrival."

The other looked at him with some surprise and a little curiosity.

"You seem well informed," he said. "Only yesterday I heard a man, whom I should have supposed likely to know more than you, regret his absence."

"Yesterday he *was* absent," said Egerton, "but he arrived in Paris last night."

"You are sure of it?"

"I am perfectly sure."

"Well," said Winter, with a slight shrug, "it seems that you have become a Socialist in earnest, since you are admitted to the confidence of the chiefs of the party. Up to this time I have never believed in your conversion. 'He is only playing with that, as he has played with other things,' I said to Leroux when he told me how you were impressed by Duchesne; 'he has no stability in him.'"

"You are very kind," said Egerton. "There is nothing so refreshing as the good opinion of a friend candidly expressed."

"There is no worth in a friend who is not candid," said Winter. "And you must confess that up to this time stability has not been your most striking characteristic."

"I have laid no claim to it," said Egerton. "I have thought more of finding truth—if truth were to be found—than of preserving a character for consistency; which, after all, often simply means that a man is not accessible to new ideas."

"If you have been in search of truth I retract all my criticisms," said Winter, "for my opinion has been that you were simply in search of novelty. *Eh bien*, you have discovered what you sought, then, in the principles of Socialism as expounded by Duchesne?"

"By no means," Egerton answered. "Principles which would reconstruct the world on a basis of communal tyranny are not to my fancy. That part of Socialism which dwells upon the wrongs and the miseries of the poor is true; but when it comes to a question of remedies it is impossible to follow men who, if they had the power, would proclaim to-morrow a crusade of wholesale robbery."

"Who by one violent revolution would set right the wrongs of centuries and demolish social conditions which nothing short of revolution can overturn," said Winter. "It is natural that you do not welcome such a prospect, since you are one of the class to be dispossessed; but it proves that I was right in believing that you were only amusing yourself with Socialism, as with other things."

Now, Egerton was amiable almost to a fault, but the scarcely veiled contempt of the other's tone was too much even for his amiability. He looked up with a spark of fire in his glance as he said:

"You are entirely mistaken. I have not been amusing myself with Socialism. It is rather a grim subject for amusement. But I was attracted by the ideal which it presented; and in

order to judge it fairly I heard its claims presented and its aims declared not by outsiders but by its warmest supporters and advocates. Consequently I have a right to say that I have weighed Socialism in the balance and found it wanting. It may convulse the world and destroy society—I grant you it has power enough for that; but it has no power to construct another society. The basis on which it rests is too unsound."

"Do you mean," said Winter, "the basis of the equal rights of man?"

"Yes," answered Egerton, "the basis of the equal rights of man. For how can you prove that man has any rights? It is an assertion without a shadow of proof. In the pagan world there was but one recognized right—that of force. The Christianity which you despise, in declaring that man has an immortal soul, gave him the charter of all the rights he possesses. But in destroying and denying Christianity you throw yourselves back upon Nature; and neither you nor any other man can prove that *naturally*—that is, according to the nature revealed to us by positive science—man has any rights above those of the horse and dog."

There was a moment's silence after this bold challenge—a challenge which no positivist can answer, and which was perhaps for the first time presented to Winter. It evidently startled him a little, and probably he was not sorry for conversation to be interrupted by breakfast, which the garçon just then placed on the table before them. But as he poured out a glass of red wine a minute later he recovered himself sufficiently to say, with the sneer which always comes readily in default of argument:

"Oh! if you have gone back to the fables of religion there is nothing more to be said. It is very natural in that case that you should turn your back on the rights of man."

"It would be so far from natural," said Egerton, "that I repeat and insist upon the assertion that it is religion which first introduced into the world the doctrine that man had any rights at all; and without religion—that is, without some form of theistic belief, however vague—you cannot prove the existence of a single right to which he may logically lay claim. All the high-sounding declarations of the French Revolution merely asserted in a political sense what the Catholic Church had for eighteen centuries asserted in a spiritual sense—that all men are equal before God. But obliterate the idea of God, and where is your equality? Science absolutely denies it, Nature—as has

been well said—abhors it, all experience disproves it. And since neither Nature nor science gives man his charter of equal rights, where do you find it? Only in Catholic theology. Your leaders have stolen it thence, but the fire of heaven in their hands can only kindle conflagration on earth."

"By Jove!" said Winter, with a stare. "Well as I thought I knew you, this is a change for which I was hardly prepared! From liberalism to Catholic theology, from positive science to the dogmas of the church, would prove a very long step for any one but yourself. *You* seem to have taken it, however, with wonderful agility; and but for the fact that your conversions never last long, I should expect to hear of you soon as 'received' at the Madeleine."

"You could hear nothing better of me, if I had the necessary faith," said Egerton quietly. "But because I point out a simple fact—a fact easily verified by history—it does not follow that I must accept that on which the claims of the church rest. Yet the man is intellectually blind who denies that they are mighty claims," he went on after a moment; "and between that church as she stands, with all her glorious past behind her, pointing to the great fabric of Christian civilization as her work, and clothed in that mantle of infallibility without which she would have no right to speak—for what is a fallible church but a human society a little more absurd than any other, inasmuch as it attempts to teach great truths of which avowedly it has no certainty?—and liberalism with its creed of human progress, which the future alone can prove, the choice is to be made. These two forces divide the world. One or the other must win the victory—the kingdom of God or what your new thinkers call the kingdom of man."

Winter looked up with the defiance which is the characteristic attitude of his school. "The human mind has outgrown the fables of the church of which you speak," he said. "The kingdom of God which it invented has passed away, and the kingdom of man has come."

"Has it?" said Egerton. "Then God help—but how if there is no God? Can we call upon matter to help man thus left at the mercy of the blind forces of nature and the blinder passions of his fellow-man, for whom justice, mercy, and right must soon become mere idle words signifying nothing, since deriving authority from nothing? But let me tell you this: that as I am never so near being a Catholic as when I talk to a positivist, so there will be nothing so likely to drive men

to the kingdom of God as the founding of your kingdom of man."

CHAPTER XXV.

It was about this time that Miss Dorrance said to her cousin one day: "Does it strike you that Sibyl is the victim of a *grande passion*?"

Mr. Talford looked a little startled. "No," he replied. "I confess that it has not struck me. Whom do you take to be the object of the passion?"

"Not yourself," said Laura, with a laugh, "nor yet any one whom you know. But you have heard of M. d'Antignac?"

"Heard of him—I should think so, indeed!" answered Mr. Talford. "Miss Bertram has entertained me on several occasions with rhapsodies about him. But what has that to do with the matter?"

"Only that he is the object of the passion."

Mr. Talford stared for a moment; then he looked disgusted.

"Women have strange ideas," he said. "There seems to me something equally absurd and revolting in the suggestion that a young, beautiful creature like Miss Bertram could find any attraction in the man of whom you speak—a hopeless invalid who, from what I hear of him, can only be said to be half-alive."

"He is not much more, as far as his body is concerned," Laura replied; "but men have strange ideas if they imagine that what attracts a woman like Sibyl Bertram has anything to do with the body. It is the spirit; and certainly there is enough of that in M. d'Antignac."

"Is there?" said her cousin, with a slight laugh. "I confess to not knowing much about spirits, either in the flesh or out of it. But I should not take them to be formidable rivals—that is, if one were sufficiently in earnest to fear a rival."

"Of course you are the best judge on that point," said Laura—"I mean about being sufficiently in earnest; but as for what constitutes a formidable rival—well, that, I should say, depends on the woman concerned. With some women it would be a million of dollars, with others a handsome face.

But you ought to know whether or not Sibyl is like such women."

"Miss Bertram is very ideal," said Mr. Talford, "but I do her the justice to believe that she distinguishes clearly between what is ideal and what is practical, and that no one is less likely to confound the one with the other. Her fancy for M. d'Antignac is very natural; but it will not interfere with—anything else."

"Will it not?" said Laura, with a glance of amusement. "Well, we shall see. I thought it only kind to give you a warning."

"A warning is justified by its need," said her cousin; "but in this case I fail to perceive the need."

Nevertheless, lightly as he had received it, the warning was not without its effect upon him, inasmuch as he began to ask himself if the time had really come when he must definitely bid farewell to the pleasant liberty of his life and take upon himself the fetters of matrimony. They were not fetters for which he was in the least eager, and he had more than once asked himself why he should think of assuming them. But these doubts had a fashion of vanishing under the influence of Sibyl Bertram; and in the magic of her presence it seemed to him that he could do nothing better than to secure a companion so well calculated at once to stimulate interest and reflect credit on his taste. And it was characteristic of the man that he felt not the least fear of being refused. He was one of a class who are so steeped in materialism that they are honestly unable to conceive a different standard in the mind of any one else. He knew his own advantages well, and to suppose Miss Bertram ignorant of or indifferent to them would simply, in his opinion, have been to convict her of want of sense. But there was no reason for such a suspicion. The peculiarity of her manner, which struck Egerton so forcibly, had not been lost on him, and he had, as we are aware, drawn his own conclusions from it. A more acute man might, indeed, have been deceived, not having the *mot de l'enigme* in a sufficient knowledge of the character of this girl.

It was, therefore, without any of the fears which beset a timid lover that Mr. Talford weighed the pros and cons of freedom and matrimony. The first was the good of many years—proved, enjoyed, tested, and prized; the other an untried experiment, promising something to one desiring novelty,

but also threatening much to one desiring change. Decision was difficult; but he knew that his desires inclined in one direction, and that a strong rush of inclination was all that was necessary to make these desires take the form of accomplished facts. Meanwhile, it was quite true that he had not seen much of Miss Bertram lately—owing partly to pre-occupation on her part, and partly to a lack of ardor on his—and although he attached slight weight to Laura's flippant remarks about M. d'Antignac, he decided that it would be well to reassert the influence which he had no doubt that he possessed. And so, on the day after the conversation recorded above, he presented himself in Mrs. Bertram's drawing-room.

It was unoccupied; and while his card was taken to Miss Bertram he walked about the room, observing idly the variety of articles which filled it. But suddenly he paused to look at a picture that he had never seen before. It was the photograph of a singularly handsome man, who wore a uniform which struck him at first as entirely unfamiliar, but which he presently recognized as that of the papal army. The card bore the imprint of a well-known Roman photographer, and, turning it over, he saw that a woman's hand had written on the back, "Raoul d'Antignac, Rome, 1867." He shrugged his shoulders slightly, and as he was in the act of replacing the picture on the miniature easel from which he had taken it, a sound of rustling drapery told him that Miss Bertram was entering.

He turned, they shook hands, and after the first common-places of greeting were over it was natural that she should say, with a smile:

"What do you think of the picture you were examining when I came in?"

"It is the likeness of a handsome man," he answered carelessly. "The original, I presume, is the M. d'Antignac of whom I have had the pleasure of hearing a good deal."

"Yes; a photograph taken when he was in Rome. His sister gave it to me, and I consider it a treasure; though I would rather have one of him as he is now."

"But I have been under the impression that there is very little left of him—not enough to photograph."

"Do you remember the story of the lady who, hearing that her lover had been shot to pieces in battle, said that she would marry him if there was enough of him left to hold his

soul?" asked Miss Bertram. "There is enough of M. d'Antignac left to hold his soul, and enough also to make a most interesting picture."

"Your story," said Mr. Talford, with a smile, "reminds me that I heard it suggested only yesterday that you are the victim of a *grande passion* for this interesting gentleman."

"I suppose Laura made the suggestion," observed Miss Bertram quietly. "It sounds like her. But Laura's ideas of a *grande passion* and mine are very different."

"So I presume," said the gentleman; "and I confess I should like very much to know what your idea is."

"Should you?" said Miss Bertram, smiling a little. "Pardon me if I say I think you are mistaken. I don't think you would care for my opinion or that of any one else on such a subject—the last I can imagine of interest to you."

This was not very encouraging; but a man of the world is not easily disconcerted, and after a moment Talford said:

"Why have you conceived such an opinion of my insensibility?"

"Do you consider that insensibility?" she asked. "I thought you would consider it simply good sense."

"I certainly consider it good sense not to fall too readily into grand passions, which, generally speaking, are grand follies," he replied; "but nevertheless I should like to hear your definition of such a passion."

"I am afraid that I do not know enough, nor have even thought enough of it, to venture on such a definition," she answered; "and probably I could not improve on yours—a grand folly. All feeling is folly—to those who do not share it."

Mr. Talford did not care to confess how nearly this was his own opinion. He felt that such an admission would not be a very auspicious opening for a suit in which the heart is supposed to play a prominent part. So he observed: "And yet feeling is necessary."

Sibyl looked at him with the smile still shining in her eyes. "You have discovered that?" she said. "Yes, I think we may not only say that feeling is necessary, but that the degree of feeling of which a man is capable is generally the measure of his worth. 'We live by admiration, hope, and love.'"

"Do we?" said Talford, unable to repress the scepticism of his tone. "It strikes me that we live by much more material means, and that, though admiration, hope, and love are very

good things in their place, they are not at all essential to our existence."

"I should say that depended upon whether you consider our existence to be animal or spiritual," replied Miss Bertram; "or rather, since it is both, on which you consider the most important of the two."

"Rather a difficult question, inasmuch as no one has yet proved where the animal ends and the spiritual begins," answered Talford, not unwilling to evade more direct reply. "But I beg that you will not misunderstand me. If admiration, hope, and love are not essential to our existence, they certainly enrich and give it value."

"As luxuries that are desirable, but can be dispensed with," said Miss Bertram. "I don't think I can admit that. On the contrary, I believe that they are vital elements in our life. I can answer for myself that if I find nothing to admire—that is, nothing to look up to—I feel life to be not only empty and worthless, but disgusting. Think of being doomed to believe that the meanness and littleness of which we are conscious in ourselves are simply duplicated all around us, that no one rises higher, and that there is nothing whatever above us! Why, it is the most horrible of all mental nightmares! Yet there are people in the world who not only accept but who cultivate such a belief."

This being the belief on which her listener's whole life was based, it may be imagined that he felt inclined to reply as Talleyrand did to Madame de Rémusat: "Ah! what a very woman you are, and how very young." But he contented himself with smiling as he said:

"I am quite sure that *you* will never cultivate such a belief, and I should be sorry to see it forced on you."

"I have felt sometimes as if it were forced on me," she said; "and it is from *that* my knowledge of M. d'Antignac has delivered me."

"Do you mean," he asked, "that you have found so much to admire in M. d'Antignac?"

"I have not only found so much to admire in him," she answered, "but he has put the world right for me; he has raised me from the level on which I was stifling, to belief again in possibilities of nobleness. I was trying to believe in such possibilities when I met him, but it was a desperate and failing effort." She paused a moment, then added quickly: "I had begun to feel as if your philosophy of life, Mr. Talford, might

be the true one after all. But it was like the taste of dust and ashes in its bitterness. If I felt as you do—that is, if I felt as you talk—I should be the most miserable of creatures.”

“The presumption is, therefore, that I should find myself the most miserable of creatures,” Talford answered quietly; “but, on the contrary, I fancy that there are few people who derive more satisfaction from existence than I do. My aspirations are limited to things within the range of my senses, and I expect nothing more from life than I am certain that it is able to yield. Ideal aspirations do not trouble me at all; and as for possibilities of nobleness in human nature, I am content with its possibilities of usefulness. Believe me, my dear Miss Bertram, men like your friend M. d’Antignac are mere dreamers, whose ideas of life are no more to be trusted than the bravery of a soldier who has never seen a battle.”

“M. d’Antignac has seen battles,” said she. “He has lived in the world.”

“Then he has learned little from it, for no man of any worldly knowledge could cherish dreams like those of which I understand you to speak.”

“I have never in my life seen any one who gave me less the idea of a dreamer than M. d’Antignac,” she said. “If you saw him you would never apply such a term to him.”

“The only reason why I could possibly desire to see M. d’Antignac would be to discover what you find so attractive in him,” said Talford, who began to feel that Laura’s warning had not been so preposterous as he imagined.

“In that case you might discover nothing,” said Sibyl. “For, as I remarked a little while ago, whatever we are not in sympathy with seems to us folly.”

There was a moment’s pause. Then Talford said quietly, but with a tone and manner not to be misunderstood: “I should like to be in sympathy with you on all points.”

The young lady flushed a little, but answered lightly:

“You are very kind, but before you could attain such sympathy I fear that one or the other of us would have to be made over again; and I cannot think that it would be a pleasant process, that of being made over. Happily there is no need to try it. We can be very good friends as friends go, with sympathy on some points and toleration on all.”

“I have always thought moderation a virtue,” said Talford, “and have flattered myself that when I could not obtain what I wanted I was able to content myself with what I could get;

but I am not sure that my philosophy will stand the test you propose. 'Very good friends as friends go'—I am afraid, Miss Bertram, that will not satisfy me."

"Very good friends, then, without the clause," said she. "I think you must be unreasonable if you are not satisfied with that. At least," going on quickly, "it is all I can offer; and since you have been good enough to compliment me on being a woman of the world, let me suggest that our conversation has wandered into a region where people of the world can hardly feel at home. Let us leave sympathies and sentiments and talk of more practical things—horses, pictures, music, or what they are saying on the boulevards. And here"—as the door opened—"comes mamma to offer the needed inspiration—a cup of tea."

But instead of Mrs. Bertram the opening door disclosed the white cap-strings of Valentine, the maid, who announced "M. Egerton," and then drew back to admit that gentleman.

It is probable that Sibyl had never before welcomed him with such sincere cordiality, and it is also probable that Talford was not sorry to see him, since his entrance relieved what might have been in another moment an awkward situation. For how can a man, having gone so far, not proceed farther? And yet Miss Bertram's manner certainly had not encouraged that proceeding, nor inspired confidence of a favorable issue. Talford's experience of feminine nature was, however, large; and he knew that the resources of that evasion which it is hardly fair to call coquetry sometimes renders it difficult to foretell the nature of an answer up to the instant of receiving it. His vanity had, therefore, a loophole of escape; and it was a loophole which just now he was not sorry to have provided.

"Though who can tell that I shall ever be so near the point again?" he thought, with genuine regret and genuine doubt of himself.

"You have come in time to share the offer of a cup of tea which I was just making to Mr. Talford," said Miss Bertram, after she had greeted Egerton with unusual warmth. "We will have it without waiting for mamma, who has been out since breakfast indulging in the delights of shopping with some American friends. There is an 'occasion' at the Bon Marché, and no feminine mind can resist the fascination of a bargain."

"You have apparently resisted it, since I have the pleasure of finding you at home," said Egerton.

"Oh! but I know that mamma will find all the bargains and

bring them to me without my undergoing the purgatory of crushing which is the penalty one has to pay for the cheapness of the great shops. I confess that I have a most undemocratic dislike to coming into close contact with my fellow-beings. I am never in such a crowd that I do not think I should like to be an archduchess, in order to have room always made for me."

"An archduchess with socialistic sympathies would be something very piquant," said Egerton, smiling. "But it is unfortunately true that democratic theories and democratic practice are very different things."

"And the impossibility of the last proves the unsoundness of the first, only you visionaries will not see it," observed Talford.

"Am I a visionary?" said Egerton. "I hardly think so, though I should be rather proud of belonging to that much-reproached class; for it is surely better to see visions of higher things, even if they are not altogether practicable, than to limit one's eyes to the dusty road of actual life."

"I have noticed that those who see such visions are rather prone to stumble on the road," said Talford.

"But what would the road be without the visions to brighten it?" said Sibyl.

Talford elevated his eyebrows. "And why," he asked, "should visions of a future democracy be more attractive than a present democracy as typified in the *bourgeois* crowd of the Bon Marché?"

"I was not thinking of democracy," she answered. "I confess that I have never had much more fancy for that in the future than in the present. I have been touched by dreams for relieving the suffering of humanity, but I have never relished the thought of enforced equality."

"Yet that is what your friends the Socialists would insist upon," said Talford.

"It is hardly fair to call them my friends, since I have not an acquaintance among them, and M. d'Antignac has nearly cured me of admiring them," said she, smiling. "If they have a friend present it must be Mr. Egerton."

"I don't know that I have a right to call myself a friend," said Egerton. "My interest in them has sprung chiefly from curiosity, and some sympathy with their aims—or, at least, their professions. No one who walks through the world with open eyes," continued the young man quickly, "can avoid being struck and saddened by the misery of human life, the hopeless

misery that encompasses the vast majority of the human race from their cradles to their graves. One feels absolutely paralyzed in the presence of it. What is to be done? Where is any help, any hope of making the lives of all these millions better for them? Now, we must admit that, with all its follies, Socialism tries to give some sort of an answer to that question."

"But what sort of an answer?" said Talford, while Sibyl looked intently at Egerton, as if some new idea with regard to him was dawning on her mind. "It is the answer of a man who would burn down your house because it is defective in construction."

"Oh! I grant that the answer is not very wise," said Egerton; "but I think there can be no doubt that it is an answer which the world will have forced upon it, unless some change comes over the spirit of society as we know it, unless it becomes less grossly material in its ends and less merciless in the method by which it seeks those ends. But I don't mean to inflict my opinions upon you," he broke off with a laugh. "The attraction which I have found in Socialism—at least in the representative Socialist whom I know—is that he feels so intensely on this subject."

"I suppose you mean M. Duchesne," said Miss Bertram.

"Yes, Duchesne, of whom you have so often heard me speak. He is so sincere an enthusiast, so ardent a visionary, that it is impossible not to be swayed by his personal influence when one is near him. In proof of which I am going with him to-morrow to Brussels."

"You!" said Miss Bertram in a tone of surprise. "For what purpose, if I may ask?"

"To attend a meeting of delegates from various countries who wish to secure amity of aim among the different revolutionary societies—in short, to revive the International. Duchesne promises that I shall see all the most prominent leaders."

"You must have become a revolutionist in earnest, to be admitted to such a gathering," said Talford.

"By no means," answered Egerton. "I am bound to nothing—Duchesne fully understands that. Very likely he thinks that I shall join them eventually, but I have never told him so. I represent myself simply as what I am—actuated by curiosity. Of course I shall not be allowed to see or know anything that would compromise them."

"I should not be too sure of that," said Talford. "You

might come to know enough to compromise your own safety if you refused to join them at last. I do not think that, if I were you, I would go to Brussels. Here, at least, you are known and have friends."

"And, therefore, could not be disposed of by dagger or dynamite without exciting some inquiry," said Egerton, smiling. "I have not the least fear of the kind."

"But the absence of fear is not always an argument against the need of fear," said Sibyl. "And if you have really no motive but curiosity—"

"I assure you I have no other," said Egerton, meeting her eyes and thinking them kinder than he had ever seen them before. "But that is sometimes a tolerably strong motive."

"It ought not to be strong enough to induce a man to run a grave risk."

"But there is positively no risk at all," said he. "Talford is simply indulging in a jest at my expense. I shall have great pleasure in giving you the points of the coming revolution when I return. Meanwhile, you spoke once of desiring to know Mlle. Duchesne. I may be permitted to say that you have now the opportunity of making her acquaintance. She is again in Paris."

But this was a little too much for Talford. He frowned, and, while Sibyl hesitated for an instant, said curtly:

"Upon my word, Egerton, I think you forget that Miss Bertram's curiosity is probably less developed than your own, and that she can hardly care to make the acquaintance of socialistic madmen—or madwomen, who are even worse."

"I should never dream of proposing such an acquaintance to Miss Bertram," answered Egerton. "Mlle. Duchesne—of whom I spoke—is indeed the daughter of a Socialist, but she is herself neither a Socialist nor a madwoman, but a very charming person and a great friend of the D'Antignacs, whom Miss Bertram knows well."

"I have heard them speak of her with high praise," said Sibyl. "If she has returned to Paris I shall probably meet her in their *salon*."

"It is likely that you may," said Egerton, who did not know of the decree which had gone forth, separating Armine from her friends.

"So it seems," said Talford, "that the remarkable M. d'Antignac is picturesquely eclectic in his acquaintance."

"Above all people whom I have ever met," said Sibyl, "he

gives me the idea of basing his regard entirely upon what a person *is*, not at all upon what his or her outward circumstances or position may be. By the side of his couch one takes rank simply according to one's merit."

"But how if one should chance to have no merit?" asked the gentleman sceptically.

"In that case one must rely upon a charity which is broad enough to cover a multitude of follies," answered the young lady, smiling. "But I am sure that you are by this time tired of hearing Aristides called the Just, so happily here comes Valentine with the tea; and here, also, is mamma to tell us all about her bargains!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

IT was quite true that Egerton, in a spirit of adventure and curiosity, had accepted Duchesne's invitation to accompany him to Brussels. "Of course," the latter had said in giving it, "you will not hear anything of the business of the meeting; but you will see many of the most famous leaders of this great movement, and you cannot fail to be impressed by personal contact with them."

Egerton, who understood thoroughly the object of the invitation, had himself no doubt of being impressed, but considerable doubt whether this impression would take the form Duchesne desired. Nevertheless it was an opportunity, an experience, which he could not let slip, though he hoped the intelligence of it might not come to Armine's ears. "For she would not understand," he said to himself; and then he was suddenly struck as with the force of a new sensation by the thought: "Why should she take so much interest—why should she care so much—whether or not I yield to her father's influence?"

It was a question which it had not occurred to him to ask before, so entirely had he accepted Armine's interest as a part of Armine's self—as something which did not conform to ordinary rules, but was the more simple and charming for that. And it has been already said that he had not much of the vanity of his sex, so that he was not inclined to interpret that interest as a man of coarser nature might have interpreted it. It had been so directly expressed, it had (he felt) so little to do with him personally, that he had accepted it simply as the manifestation of the girl's strong feeling on the subject

which had most deeply colored her life. Yet now, in his hope that this Brussels journey might not come to her knowledge, he was startled into asking himself whether such interest was indeed entirely impersonal—if he was merely a brand which she wished to snatch from the socialistic burning, or one who had been fortunate enough to excite in her something of more than ordinary interest.

However that might be, he felt quite sure of the interest which she had excited in *him*—an interest deeper (he said to himself) than any he had ever known before. “Falling in love,” in the conventional sense, seemed commonplace and poor compared to this emotion blent of so many subtle elements—admiration, interest, pity, and a sense as if she could give something of which he stood in need, some spiritual light or moral strength. But he knew too much of the human heart in general and of his own in particular to be certain that this sentiment, fine and delicate as it was, possessed either endurance or strength. “I was delighted to see her,” he thought, recalling the day when he had suddenly come upon her graceful presence by the fountain in the old palace garden, “but was it not as I might have been glad to open again a book that had fascinated me, or an interesting study that I had not exhausted? And have not the days always come when I have exhausted every such study? Yes, they are right—Winter and Miss Bertram, and D’Antignac too, no doubt, if he spoke what he thought—when they declare that I have no strength or conviction of feeling. The enthusiasm to espouse a cause, and the passion to love a woman, seem alike lacking in me!”

Notwithstanding this conclusion, however, it was interest in Armine—the recollection of their conversation in the Luxembourg Garden, and the desire to know more that was going on in her mind and soul—which moved him to seek her father again, else he would probably have suffered that enthusiastic Socialist to pass out of his life. He called at the apartment in the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, saw Duchesne and received the invitation to accompany him to Brussels, but did *not* see Armine. There was no mention of her beyond Duchesne’s brief reply to his hope that she was well; he was not asked to enter the *salon*, and some instinct that all was not well between father and daughter prevented him from begging to do so.

It was an instinct well founded, for in truth father and

daughter had never in their lives been so far apart in feeling and sympathy as they were at this time. Armine's foreboding of some deeply-seated change in her father was more than realized. Since the day at Marigny he had never been "like himself," and instead of the kind and indulgent father she had known all her life he was now suspicious, harsh, and severe. She had reluctantly spoken of this change to the D'Antignacs; but it was greater than she was willing to acknowledge, and had become more marked since she parted with them. For when, after much mental struggle and debate, she had taken D'Antignac's note to the priest to whom it was addressed, she found all that he had promised of instruction, comfort, and encouragement; but she was told that before she could be received into the church she must acquaint her father with her intention. The girl knew what she would bring upon herself, but it was not in her to quail from anything in the form of a duty. She told her father of her resolution. And then the storm burst.

It was a storm such as she had never known before, such as she had hardly conceived possible. She had been aware that Duchesne regarded the church with animosity, but she had not classed him with those who are so virulent in their hatred that there is only one explanation possible of the spirit which animates them. She had supposed that he condemned and disliked that which was the chief bulwark against the spread of ideas to which he had devoted his life, but she could not have dreamed that he was capable of that unreason of blind rage which French atheism betrays whenever it touches upon the question of religion. It was quite true that she had not lived so long among the professed disciples of freedom of thought without learning what freedom of thought means from their point of view—to wit, freedom for themselves and intolerance for every one else—but the loyalty of the girl's nature had asserted itself in this, as in all else where her father was concerned. She had refused to believe that he could be so narrow in the name of liberty, so tyrannical in the name of freedom, as others were around him.

But incredulity was no longer possible. The proud faith in which she had lived—faith in his reasonableness and nobleness, however mistaken it might be—lay shattered at her feet; and it is not too much to say that a great part of her life lay shattered with it. For this faith had sustained the affection for her father which was the strong centre of her existence. To

spare him pain she had been almost ready to deny her God—at least by such passive form of denial as lies in not acknowledging—and now she felt as if it were sharpest punishment that with his own hand he demolished the ideal she had loved.

For that ideal had little in common with the man who in violent words forbade her ever to approach a priest again, who spoke of religion in terms of bitter hatred, and told her that henceforth she could be trusted no longer, but would be placed under strict surveillance. "For I find that you have had too much freedom," he said. "I forgot too easily that folly and deception make up the character of woman. But I will take care that you see no more of those who have taught you to array yourself against me, and to betray, as far as lies in your power, that cause of freedom which is dearer to me than my heart's blood. We shall leave Paris soon; until then I will place you with the wife of one of my friends, requesting that she will exercise over you the closest watchfulness."

This meant, Armine felt sure, a species of imprisonment; and she was not mistaken. Even more violent and intolerant (if such a thing were possible) than the men are the women who array themselves under the banner of free-thought. And such a woman was the one with whom her father placed her—a woman against whom every instinct of her nature and her taste revolted. But she could do nothing save submit. Even appeal, she felt, would be useless, and she made no attempt to change or soften her father's resolution. She was only able before leaving his house to send a little note to the priest, which the latter took to D'Antignac—a few pathetic words saying that she had followed his counsel, and that the result was what she had feared: her father, deeply incensed, had forbidden her to see him again, and to enforce his command had removed her to stricter guardianship.

"My poor Armine!" said D'Antignac when he read these lines. "My heart aches for her. I know well what she is suffering."

"It is a great privilege to have something to suffer for God," said the priest quietly. "This trial will do her no harm, but much good, if she is made of the stuff I fancy her to be."

"It would be difficult to fancy better stuff than she is made of," said D'Antignac. "If occasion tries her you will find that her soul is heroic in its temper."

"I was very much impressed with her," said the priest. "Even without your letter I think I should have been. One

who sees much of human nature must—unless very unobservant—learn to judge character by apparently trifling signs. One of the things which struck me in Mlle. Duchesne was that she said no more than was necessary of herself. But in all that she did say she showed remarkably clear intellect and very fine feeling.”

“I suppose I am something of an enthusiast about Armine,” said D’Antignac, smiling. “But I am sure that no one in the world knows her better than I do—indeed, I doubt if any one knows her so well—and my opinion is that she belongs to the highest and finest type of character, to that order of great souls for whom God has special uses.”

Then a gentleman who was looking over a paper at a window glanced up and said: “What do you take those uses to be?”

“Ah!” said D’Antignac, “that I do not pretend to be able to tell. If I did I should probably make a great mistake. But you, Gaston, will agree with me that Armine Duchesne is no ordinary person.”

The Vicomte de Marigny—for it was no other than he—laid down his paper and came forward before answering. Then he said quietly:

“My acquaintance with Mlle. Duchesne is very slight, but I certainly think she is no ordinary person. You know”—he hesitated for an instant—“I saw her down in Brittany. Did she tell you that?”

“Yes,” D’Antignac replied. “She mentioned it as one reason—or at least one apparent reason—for a great change in her father. It seems that he was never the same to her after he saw her speaking to you at Marigny.”

“Poor girl!” said the vicomte. “I am sorry, then, that I addressed her. I only did so in order to show her that I did not identify her with her father. It is perhaps necessary to explain, M. l’Abbé,” he added, turning to the priest, “that her father—the well-known Socialist Duchesne—was in Brittany for the purpose of defeating my election, if possible.”

“If one may judge by the majority which returned you, M. le Vicomte, he might have spared himself the trouble,” said the priest, smiling.

“Brittany is always faithful,” said the vicomte.

“Yet even in faithful Brittany was there not an attempt upon your life made?” asked the other.

The vicomte shrugged his shoulders. “A trifling affair,”

he said. "I am quite sure that the perpetrators were not Bretons. A clumsy affair, too. It was the night after the election, and I was sitting in my study writing, when I heard stealthy steps beneath my window. Thanks to a friendly warning, I had a weapon near me, and I quietly laid my hand on it. The next moment something like a bomb was thrown through the open window and fell at my feet. It was instinct rather than thought which made me snatch it up and hurl it out again. It exploded when it touched the ground, as it had been meant to explode when it first landed at my feet; and it is needless to say that if it had done so I should not be talking to you now. The moment that the detonation was over I rushed to the window and fired at the figure of a man whom I could plainly see making off with great haste. But I presume that my shot did not strike him, since no one was found when the servants, who hastily gathered, searched the grounds. *Voilà tout!*"

"Was no further attempt made?" asked the priest.

"None, although I remained at Marigny for several days after. I had no business to detain me, but was simply determined that the instigators of the attempt should not fancy that they had frightened me."

"Whom do you suppose the instigators to have been?"

"Oh! the secret societies that I have so often denounced; there can be no doubt of that. They do me honor by esteeming me a dangerous opponent."

Then the conversation was diverted to the political situation, and it was not until the priest had taken his departure that D'Antignac said to his companion:

"You spoke of a friendly warning, Gaston; may I ask who gave it?"

The vicomte did not answer. Instead he put out his hand and took up Armine's note, which had fallen on the couch and been left there by the abbé, to whom it was addressed. He opened it and read it over silently—a proceeding excusable on the ground that he had already heard its contents read aloud and discussed. Then he drew from his pocket another note, which he placed beside it and offered to D'Antignac.

There was some difference in the writing of the two—a difference due to the nervous haste and agitation with which the first had been produced—but even with this difference it was sufficiently evident that the same hand had written both. D'Antignac, at least, felt not an instant's doubt. He started and said in a tone of deep feeling:

"It was like her; but what it must have cost her, my poor, brave Armine!"

"I never doubted that it came from her," said the vicomte; "yet my certainty had no proof until now. I had, of course, never seen a line of her writing before."

But D'Antignac, with his eyes still on the note, could only repeat again what was so often on his lips, "My poor Armine!" Then after a pause he looked at the vicomte. "If you knew her as well as I do," he said, "every word of this would be eloquent for you. You would understand the struggle which it must have cost her to write it."

"I think I understand," said the other. "I cannot possibly know her as you do, but I know her—somewhat. How could one look in her eyes and not know her somewhat? And this note"—he held out his hand for it—"brought me another message than that which it bears on its face: a message of a gentle heart, of a brave soul, of a nature that could not stand by and see wrong done unmoved, but that, even at the cost of bringing blame where blame was not due, felt bound to send a warning that might save a life."

"She is all that," said D'Antignac, looking at him a little keenly; "but it is strange that you should have learned so much of her on so slight an acquaintance."

"It *is* strange," said the vicomte, as if he were answering his own thought as well as the words of the other, "but it is a curious fact that one learns more of some people at a glance than one learns of others from the acquaintance of a lifetime. Mlle. Duchesne's character is very sympathetic. But what first probably excited my interest in her was the consciousness in my mind of the unacknowledged tie of blood between us."

"How did you discover that?" asked D'Antignac.

"I have always known that my granduncle left a son who called himself Duchesne, and who gave the family some annoyance by asserting that he was the legitimate heir, though he could not prove the marriage of his parents. I might not, however, have been aware that the Socialist leader was *his* son but for the fact that the latter was at Marigny once—several years ago—to see a man, the son of my granduncle's confidential servant, from whom he hoped, no doubt, to obtain information."

"And failed?"

"*Cela va sans dire*. What could not be proved at the time was hardly likely to be susceptible of proof at this late date."

"And this fact," said D'Antignac, "the cloud upon his father's birth, has no doubt not only embittered him against the order to which he does *not* belong, but also against you, who hold what he believes to be his inheritance."

"He cannot possibly believe that," said the vicomte, "since there is not a shred of proof that his grandparents were married."

"He may not believe it, but none the less he feels injured, you may be sure. It is almost invariably the attitude of those who have suffered in this way. It also accounts for his harshness to his daughter when he saw her speak to you."

"Did she know or suspect the cause of his harshness?"

"No. She spoke of it with simple wonder, unable to account for what seemed to her an extent of prejudice simply incomprehensible."

"Then I suppose that I must never speak to her again, unless I meet her here."

"You are not likely to meet her," said D'Antignac. "Her father has forbidden her to see us—chiefly, if not altogether, because she first met you here."

The vicomte looked startled. "I am sorry—I am very sorry," he said. "But I have nothing with which to blame myself."

"Nor have I anything with which to blame you," said the other, "except, perhaps, a little want of thought. Knowing the father to be what he is, I do not think that, in your place, I would have spoken to her at Marigny—or, at least, I should have been content with a mere salutation."

"It was hardly more," said the vicomte, in the tone of one who feels called upon to justify himself. "And her father was not with her. She was standing at the church door, and I had just left the presbytère. What was more natural than that I should have exchanged a few words with her, partly from courtesy, and partly, I confess, because she has always attracted me?"

D'Antignac smiled. "The last reason," he said, "is a strong one—especially since you are not very easily attracted."

"Far from it," said De Marigny. "It is my misfortune, or perhaps my good fortune, to be insensible to many charms which other men feel. But a face so sensitive and so poetic as Mlle. Duchesne's I have seldom seen, and as seldom have I heard a voice so like a chord of music."

"It may be as well that you are not likely to hear it again,"

said D'Antignac with some significance. "There can hardly be two people in the world placed farther apart than you and the daughter of Duchesne the Socialist."

CHAPTER XXVII.

AND so it came to pass that Egerton saw nothing of Armine before he started with Duchesne to Brussels. If he had seen her it is likely that a word or even a glance might have changed his resolution and prevented his going—on such slender chances do many of the most important events of life depend!—but, failing this, the journey recommended itself to him as one promising interest and novelty, and on the morning appointed he met Duchesne at the Gare du Nord.

The Socialist looked pleased to see him, and held out his hand, saying, with that peculiar charm of manner which Egerton had felt from the first of their acquaintance:

"This is almost more than I hoped. I feared that at the last you might not feel interest enough to come."

"On the contrary, I feel immensely interested, and should be sorry if anything had occurred to prevent my coming," answered Egerton, smiling.

"You will not regret it," said the other, indulging in the rashness of prophecy. "Now, shall we take our tickets?"

They took their tickets, took also their places in a first-class carriage, which they had happily to themselves, and so rolled out of Paris in the soft gray mist of early morning.

How well Egerton remembered afterwards the appearance of everything—the suburbs through which they passed, the eminence of Montmartre, crowned by the great unfinished Church of the Sacred Heart, which the Republicans are so anxious to demolish, and then the open country with its fields and poplars! He remembered the look of it all, though he certainly was not conscious of paying special attention to what was at once so familiar and so uninteresting. For a while both men glanced over the morning papers, which they had with them; then presently Duchesne laid his down and began to talk. Never, it seemed to Egerton, had he talked better, with more force, more of the magnetism born of passionate conviction and enthusiasm. The conversation ranged over a wide field, dealing with the social conditions of mankind in many countries and during many ages, as well as with those great hopes for the future which Duchesne described with vivid eloquence. As Egerton listened he under-

stood what Armine had meant in saying that she feared her father's influence for him. Exposed defenceless to this influence, he felt that he could not have answered for himself; he must have been carried away. Something of this he said to the man who, he could see, was intent upon his conversion :

"One could easily be swept off one's feet by enthusiasm in listening to you," he said. "But I am sure you would not care for an adhesion which was not founded on the conviction of the mind."

"Sometimes the mind needs to be instructed by the heart," said the other. "If you are once roused to enthusiasm conviction will follow, unless you stifle it."

"I have no desire to stifle it," Egerton began. Then he paused abruptly; for what was happening? There was a shock that threw both men off their feet, a convulsion, as it were, of every atom of matter in the long line of swaying carriages, then a crash and a scene of wild terror, confusion, and horror baffling description.

On the well-regulated railways of France accidents do not often occur; but no human foresight can guard against all chances, prevent all carelessness. This accident was one which startled France at the time of its occurrence; but there is no need to dwell upon its awful details as the newspapers dwelt upon them. The reporter takes in the whole scene and photographs it in ghastly unity; but the actors in the terrible tragedy are rarely conscious of more than their individual share of fear or suffering.

It was so with Egerton. He had but a vague recollection of anything after the convulsive shock—after his last sight of Duchesne's face paling with excitement as he said, "It is an accident!" Then followed the final crash, a heavy blow, and unconsciousness. When he came to himself again, after an interval of the length of which he had no idea, it was with a sense of physical pain such as he had never known before in his life. His whole body seemed full of a terrible consciousness of agony, under the effect of which he opened both his eyes and his lips—the first to see, and the second to groan.

Then he found that he had been removed a little from the débris of the wrecked train, and that he was lying on a stretch of green turf, with some one—probably a surgeon—bending over him.

"Ah! that is where you are hurt," the former said quickly, as the young man opened his eyes.

"Yes," said Egerton faintly. He added after a moment, "I am hurt everywhere. Am I dying?"

"I don't think so," the other answered. "As far as I can judge, your injuries only amount to some bruises and a broken arm. You have fared better than many of your fellow-travellers. Yonder is a man, for example, both of whose legs are so badly crushed that if he lives at all he will lose them."

"Poor fellow!" said Egerton, with a pang of sympathy to which these commonplace words gave but scant expression. Through his own pain he entered into the greater pain of others, and his heart seemed to sicken within him as he caught a glimpse of mangled forms and heard the groans of mortal agony which filled the air. Then he thought of Duchesne and asked eagerly for him.

"Duchesne!" the surgeon repeated. "Ah! yes, I am glad you asked. There is a man so badly injured that he will die within an hour, who says his name is Duchesne, and who asked me to bring to him his friend and companion, if I could find him alive—some one with a foreign name."

"I am the man," said Egerton quickly. "Ah! monsieur, for God's sake help me to get to him."

How this was accomplished the young fellow scarcely knew, for it was but by contrast with greater injuries that the surgeon had thought lightly of his. As has already been said, his whole body seemed resolved into one mighty throb of physical anguish, and it was only the brave will which enabled him, with the surgeon's assistance, to drag himself to where Duchesne lay, gasping away his life in an agony for which language has no expression.

That it *was* Duchesne—that this shattered, mutilated wreck of humanity could be the stately man he had last seen—Egerton for a moment could not realize. He stood silent, in speechless horror. But when the eyes—brilliant and dark as ever—opened, he knew *them* at once.

"So you are safe!" Duchesne said feebly. "Forgive me for having brought you into this."

"There is nothing to forgive," answered Egerton quickly. "Who could foretell anything so fearful? And I have fared better than others—far better, my friend, than you, to whom I would gladly give my safety."

"No," said Duchesne; and if he spoke grimly it was because it was only by a terrible effort that he could subdue his pain sufficiently to speak at all. "It is better as it is. I

am not willing to die—far from it, for I have much work yet to do—but if it was to be one of us, I was the right one. You will suffer enough as it is for having been persuaded to come with me. Don't talk!" he said almost sharply, as Egerton began to speak. "There is something I must say to you, and I may not have many minutes in which to say it. Ah! what agony," he cried out suddenly, and his whole frame writhed with a convulsion which haunted Egerton for many a long day afterward. When it subsided sufficiently for him to speak, great drops of sweat, like that which we are told accompanies torture, stood on his livid brow.

"It is—of—Armine," he gasped faintly.

Here Egerton, thinking to spare him, interposed with an assurance that he would charge himself with the future welfare of Mlle. Duchesne; but the words had scarcely passed his lips when the dying Socialist answered with a tone of pride:

"My daughter is not dependent on the kindness of strangers. If she needed charity the comrades of her father would gladly care for her. But she has an inheritance which is hers by right, and this she must claim."

There was another pause, which Egerton did not break. He feared by a word to exhaust the little strength which Duchesne possessed, and which he now perceived was necessary for some essential statement. Presently he was able to speak again:

"She knows nothing of it; it will be for you to tell her, and to direct her what to do. And I must tell *you*, if—if this agony will let me speak! You know—or you have heard of—the Vicomte de Marigny. But he has no claim to his rank or property. *I* am the heir of both!"

"You!" said Egerton, thunderstruck. For an instant he thought that the mind of the speaker was surely wandering, but the dark eyes which met his own were clearly rational.

"Yes, I!" repeated Duchesne. "I have not time for seeking phrases. I must speak to the point. Listen, then. The name which I bear I inherited from my father; but I always knew that he assumed it on account of its revolutionary association, and because he could not prove his right to that of his father, who was Vicomte de Marigny when the Revolution broke out. It is a long story, for which I have not breath; but when the Revolution was at its height this Vicomte de Marigny, flying for his life, was saved by a daughter of the people. She con-

sealed him in one of the sea-caves on the Breton coast, supplied him with food, finally arranged for his escape to England, and fled with him. That he married her my father always believed, but knew not where to turn for proof, his mother having died in his infancy, and his father suddenly expiring on the eve of the Restoration. He had never acknowledged the boy—whom he placed, however, at school in England—as his legitimate son; so his brother took possession of the title and estates, with no one to question his right.”

Again he paused, and it seemed almost impossible that he could continue save by a superhuman effort. Yet, as Egerton thought—forgetting his own suffering in the sharp tension of the moment—if he did *not* continue, where was there any point in this narrative on which to found a claim? His heart almost stood still with suspense. He began to doubt again whether Duchesne was not wandering in mind, when suddenly the latter looked up and spoke, but even more faintly, with even greater difficulty:

“It was at Marigny—when I was there a few weeks ago—that at last I found the proof. The son of the servant of the vicomte my grandfather is living there. He sent for me and relieved his conscience of a burden which he said had long oppressed it. This was the knowledge he had received from his father, who was present at the marriage of my grandparents; the place where the marriage took place, and where the record of it is no doubt to be found, is Dinau. It was a civil marriage—there were no others allowed then—between Henri Marigny (all aristocratic prefixes were also forbidden) and Louise Barbeau. Tell Armine to search for the record of this marriage, and to claim the inheritance which is hers.”

“But why have you left this for her to do? Why did you not claim it when you learned the truth?” asked Egerton.

“I am a Socialist!” said Duchesne, with a chord of inexpressible pride vibrating through the tones of his voice. “From my youth I have lived only for the rights of man. I meant—perhaps—in time to claim this inheritance, in order that I might use it for great ends. But it is not to be; and I fear—I fear—”

“What do you fear?” asked Egerton, as the failing voice ceased. “If it is anything in which I can be of service to you, I promise to execute your wishes to the utmost extent of my power.”

The other gave the hand which held his a slight pressure.

"Thank you, *mon ami*," he murmured. "It is a comfort to me that you are here, and I hope that you are not badly injured."

"Never mind about me," said Egerton almost impatiently. "Speak of yourself. Tell me what it is that you fear, what I can do for you."

"I fear for Armine, in whose hands this great trust will be placed," said Duchesne. "Will she use it as I wish? I doubt, for she has fallen of late under fatal influences. I am punished for thinking that it mattered little what folly a woman believed, and for letting her go her way as she would. Now, when so much is placed in her hand, she proves to be the slave of superstition. Ah!"—what a passionate cry it was—"surely it is bitter to be struck down with so much undone! I meant to take her far away from the influences that have misled her, to show her the great work to which my life was pledged, to open her eyes, and *then* to say, 'Here is something which you must use not for yourself but for humanity!' Well, I shall never say it now; but you, my friend—you will say it for me. That is what I ask of you."

"I promise to repeat to her all that you have said," Egerton replied; "and if you will tell me any special disposition of the property which you wish made, I am sure she will respect your wishes."

Duchesne did not answer for a moment. Then he said faintly and with great difficulty: "It is not possible; I can only leave it to her. But you may tell her that it is my dying wish, nay, my dying command, that she will not marry the Vicomte de Marigny."

Egerton felt his heart give a bound—probably of surprise—at those words. Then he said involuntarily: "Does she think of it?"

"No," Duchesne answered, "but I suspect that *he* does—at least I am sure that he will when he knows. But even from my grave I forbid it. Remember that."

What could Egerton reply? Could he expostulate with this dying man, and point out that such a marriage would be desirable, inasmuch as it would reconcile conflicting claims? He almost felt as if he were bound to do so; but as he hesitated he saw that it was too late. An awful change—a change like unto no other—came over Duchesne's face, and in a moment the young man knew that there is but one visitor who comes to mankind with such a touch.

"My friend," he cried, "you are dying. Will you not call on God once before you go to face him?"

It was an appeal wrung from the depths of a heart which until this terrible moment had not been conscious of possessing faith, and was so earnest that it might have touched the dying man, if anything could. But as he opened his eyes for the last time something of the fire of a life-long defiance flashed into them.

"There is no God," he said. "*Vive l'humanité!*"

And with these words still on his lips the soul passed forth—to meet Him whom it had denied.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was like a terrible evil dream to Egerton—that fearful scene through which he had passed—when he found himself again in Paris, shattered, bruised, and with a broken arm which it was necessary to submit to a surgeon at once. But this was not his first duty; his first was to dictate a few lines to D'Antignac and send them by his servant.

"I do not know," he said, after stating briefly all that had occurred, "where Mlle. Duchesne is to be found; but I would suggest that Mlle. d'Antignac should, if possible, go to her, since I am sure there are no lips from which she could better receive this sad and shocking news. I will see her as soon as she is able to receive me. If Mlle. d'Antignac sees her, may I beg that she will say this?"

But some time elapsed before Mlle. d'Antignac was able to see Armine. In the first place, it proved difficult to discover her whereabouts. At the apartment in the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs no one was to be found. The concierge reported that even Madelon was gone and he did not know her address. Was she with Mlle. Duchesne? He shook his head; he did not know, but thought not. Mademoiselle went away one day with her father; Madelon did not leave until a day or two later, and although it was true that she might have gone to join mademoiselle, he did not think so.

"What am I to do?" said Hélène when she went back to her brother. "How am I to find this poor child?"

D'Antignac answered: "You can only wait. Sooner or later she will be heard of in the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, and if you told the concierge to let you know whenever he had any tidings of her or of Madelon—"

"I told him that, of course, and emphasized it with the promise of reward for such tidings."

"Then nothing else remains to be done. You can only wait with such patience as you are able to command."

"Which is none at all when I think of her," said H  l  ne in a tone full of distress. "What must she be suffering, alone—or worse than alone—my poor Armine!"

"She is suffering a great deal, no doubt," said D'Antignac; "but not even your presence and your sympathy could relieve her grief *now*. Let that be your comfort for not finding her. In the first agony of such a shock consolation is so impossible that it really matters little what influences surround the sufferer."

H  l  ne shook her head. "I cannot think that," she said. "However much we are absorbed in grief, we must be conscious of sympathetic or unsympathetic surroundings. And, unfortunately, though we cannot tell what her present surroundings are, we may fear that they are very far from sympathetic."

"Perhaps, then, this fact may lessen her grief for the father who placed her in them."

"Ah!" said H  l  ne, "it seems to me that, on the contrary, it would make it more bitter. How proudly, until the last time that she was here, she always dwelt upon her father's integrity of purpose! How often she spoke of his unselfishness and unvarying kindness to herself! And now—I do not see a ray of consolation to which she can turn."

"Of earthly consolation there is none for her," said D'Antignac sadly. "But her faith is strong. We must pray much for her."

Days passed without bringing them any tidings. The journals every morning were full of the fearful accident which had occurred, the additional particulars that each succeeding day brought to light, and the progress of the investigation into the cause of the disaster. Duchesne's death was undoubtedly the greatest sensation connected with the event. The radical press had columns upon columns of panegyric and lamentation for him; a grand civil funeral was decreed, by which his late associates strove at once to do honor to his memory and excite popular feeling in their own behalf; while the meeting to attend which he was on his way when the awful catastrophe happened was adjourned over for two days, and most of the brother delegates of the dead revolutionist stood around the grave in *P  re la Chaise* to which his

mangled remains were consigned with mingled eulogy of the life and labors thus so mournfully and prematurely cut short, and mad denunciations of the existing order of things.

"But this is horrible!" said D'Antignac, dropping one of the papers he had been reading to the couch on which he lay. "Poor child! how will she endure all that she is compelled, I fear, to see and know of this madness?"

"It is indeed terrible for her," said Hélène, turning, with mixed sensations of disgust and heart-sick sympathy for Armine, from the furious and blasphemous diatribes pronounced over the body of Duchesne, at which she, too, had been glancing. Looking up as she spoke, she saw that her brother's face, usually so serene, wore a more perturbed expression than she had seen on it before for years. She was almost startled to perceive how seriously disquieted he evidently was; and, rising at once, she said with decision:

"I will go again and see if I can hear anything about her. I think the concierge would surely have kept his word and informed me if he had learned her whereabouts; still, it will do no harm to try and gain some intelligence."

"Inquire of the concierge where Madelon might be heard of," said D'Antignac. "Even if she is not with Armine, and does not know where the poor child is, she may be useful in tracing her."

"Yes," said Hélène quickly. "I remember now that Madelon has a sister, or some relative, whom she used to visit frequently. I will endeavor to find out where this person lives."

When she was gone D'Antignac put his hand under his pillow, and, drawing out his rosary, began to tell the beads, his countenance as he did so regaining its wonted peaceful look, though there was still sadness in the thoughtful gaze which wandered from its near surroundings to rest on the blue depths of sky far away. But this sadness did not last long. When after, comparatively speaking, a brief absence his sister returned disappointed from her quest, he looked up to her troubled and sorrowful countenance with a quiet, almost cheerful smile.

"We must be patient," he said. "Poor child! it is hard for her; but she is in the hands of God, and therefore safe."

"Yes," said Hélène; "and yet, though I blame myself for it, I cannot but feel afraid for her. She is so young—so utterly alone! And where can she have been taken? Per-

haps out of Paris! It seems that she left some days before her father started on his fatal journey, and that her luggage was carried with her."

"I am not afraid for her," said D'Antignac. "I have been thinking it all over while you were away. As for Duchesne himself, God have mercy on his soul; but so far as Armine is concerned, his death is the best thing that could possibly have happened for her. It has delivered her not only from outside dangers, the tyranny and persecution to which she would doubtless have been subjected—which, indeed, had already begun—but from the worse danger of interior strife; the constant battle between nature and conscience; the exquisite pain of being obliged to elect between antagonism to her father and unfaithfulness to God. The suffering is sharp now; but time will assuage that, and whatever her future life may prove, it is scarcely likely that it will be so painful as the past."

At this point in the conversation, and before Hélène had time to reply, the door opened and a servant informed her that Mlle. Duchesne's maid wished to speak to her.

"Bring her into the *salon* at once, Cesco," Mlle. d'Antignac said eagerly, and hurried out to meet the welcome visitor. She remained away but a moment.

"I see that Madelon has brought good news," said D'Antignac, as she approached with the smile which her brilliant eyes and white teeth made so flashing.

"News that satisfies me, for the present at least," she answered. "The poor child has just returned to the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, and Madelon entreats me to go to her."

"Go, by all means, and at once, *ma sœur*," he said. "You will bring her back with you?"

"Of course, if I can. But I fear that it may not be easy to persuade her to come."

"Why?" he asked with some surprise.

"Madelon is, you know, a dull, uncommunicative creature, who has neither the will nor the power to express herself clearly, and I can only gather from the little she says that she is very uneasy about Armine. 'Mademoiselle is changed--mademoiselle is changed,' was almost all that I could extract from her."

"Naturally such a blow as this, succeeding as it did great trouble of mind, must affect her sensibly," he said. "But I agree with you; I am satisfied for the present to know that she is safe and in Paris."

Mlle. d'Antignac had never been in the apartment in the Rue des Petits Champs before, and when Madelon opened the door of the small *salon* and ushered her in she almost shivered, so dreary and uninhabited did the place look; for now there was no cheerful fire burning, no fragrance of violets on the air, nothing of the atmosphere of home-life and refinement of taste, which had so pleased Egerton's fastidious eye on the night when he first made the acquaintance of the Socialist and his daughter. Dismantled of all the graceful prettiness with which Armine had surrounded herself when its inmate, it was merely in appearance "an apartment to let," and Madelon, without pausing, crossed the floor, lifted the *portiere* which draped the entrance to what had been Duchesne's study, and motioned Mlle. d'Antignac to pass in.

There was something inexpressibly sad to H  l  ne in the aspect of this room. It was evident that it remained just as its late owner had left it. Chairs were sitting about, the table wore that air of orderly disorder so characteristic of an intellectual worker; and at one side of this table, just opposite an empty arm-chair that looked as if its occupant had risen from it but the moment before, sat Armine.

As H  l  ne's eye fell on the girl she was struck with a sense of surprise. She had, even before Madelon's advent and report, naturally expected that Armine would be much affected by the terrible calamity which had befallen her—had expected, indeed, that she would be overwhelmed by grief. And Madelon had said that she was "changed, changed." But at a first glance there seemed no change at all to be observed. The girl was sitting in shadow, it is true, so that her face could be seen imperfectly only; but her attitude and air were so natural and familiar, as she leaned back in her chair with hands clasped before her and eyes fixed in quiet thought, apparently, on the table, that H  l  ne stood still gazing at her in momentarily increasing amazement.

Suddenly becoming conscious of the gaze, Armine lifted her eyes, and, perceiving the presence of her visitor, rose quietly to receive her.

"It is very good of you to come to me, dear Mlle. d'Antignac," she said, advancing; and after her usual affectionate greeting she led the way into the *salon*, seated H  l  ne on a couch beside an open window, and stood before her while asking after D'Antignac.

H  l  ne replied mechanically to the inquiry, for the broad

light that now fell over the girl showed that Madelon had spoken truth. Armine was changed; that homely and familiar phrase, which is so expressive, rose to Hélène's mind: "She does not look like herself."

Yet the alteration was so subtle, so intangible, that it was some little time before Mlle. d'Antignac could define in what it consisted. It was not that the always pale face was now absolutely bloodless, nor that the delicate features had that sharp chiselling in all their lines, but especially about the nostril, which the touch of suffering alone can give; such signs of grief as these are too ordinary to excite surprise. Voice and manner seemed thoroughly natural—quiet and subdued, but not more so than usual, Hélène thought. "Perhaps," she said to herself, "it is the absence of the emotion which is naturally to be expected that gives so strange an impression"; but the instant afterwards she knew this could not be so. Of emotion actively expressed there was no trace whatever; yet it was impossible to look at Armine without feeling that the iron had entered her soul and was piercing it to the core.

After the question about D'Antignac's health had been asked and answered there was a momentary pause. Hélène hesitated to allude to the death of Duchesne, and Armine sat silent, thought-absorbed apparently. But at length the former said caressingly: "You will come home with me, my child, will you not? Raoul and myself both wish it."

As Armine looked up to reply Hélène saw where it was that the change lay. It was in the eyes and mouth.

"Thank you," she answered. "Yes, I will gladly come, since you are so kind as to let me; but not yet. I have to stay here for a while."

"But cannot you come with me now and return to-morrow? Raoul will be disappointed if I do not bring you back with me," said Hélène persuasively.

"I wish I could go," the girl answered. "But I must remain here now; there is business to be attended to before I leave."

She pointed toward the room they had left, and went on in the same calm manner which seemed so unnatural under the circumstances.

"Dear Mlle. d'Antignac, I see that you are surprised at me. I am surprised at myself. I do not know what is the matter with me. I thought at first that I was stunned, and that that was the reason of my feeling so strangely. But there has been

time for sensation to return, and it does not come. My heart seems dead. It has no sensation. I cannot even think steadily of what has happened. My thoughts wander off on trifles. I feel utterly indifferent about everything."

"You *are* stunned," said H  l  ne. "It is with our hearts as with our bodies—a sudden and terrible shock paralyzes for a time." Then, as a neighboring clock struck the hour, which was later than she had been aware, she rose to go. As she took the girl's hand to say adieu a sudden rush of pity caused her to clasp the slender form in her arms and say warmly: "O my dear! I grieve that I can do nothing to comfort you. But Raoul—he surely can!"

Armine shook her head. "Even he can do nothing for me," she said. "Yet I would go to him, if I could. But there are people—men—to be here to-night. I must see them. And this—"

She touched her dress, and H  l  ne for the first time noticed that this dress was not black and said: "I should have thought of that. Let me go and see to it at once."

"You are very good," said Armine; "but it is needless. Madelon is attending to it."

"Then, my dear Armine, God be with you! I will see you again to-morrow, and will pray for you."

"Yes, pray for me," said Armine. "I cannot even pray for myself."

D'Antignac listened silently as his sister described her visit, nor did he speak for some minutes after she had concluded the narrative. Then he said with a sigh:

"She is in very deep waters. There is a terrible passage of suffering before her, and it may last long. But she has an heroic spirit, a pure heart—above all, a single intention. The last will sustain her against the despair that threatens to overwhelm her."

"Her impassiveness gives me a strange feeling of terror," said H  l  ne. "It is so unnatural. It is impossible but that a reaction must come. Looking at her face, I should not have been surprised to see her burst at any moment into convulsive raving."

Raoul shook his head. "That is not the danger I apprehend," he said. "I am afraid that her physical strength may become exhausted, and that she may sink into a low fever or congestion of the brain. By the way, did you tell her that Egerton wishes to know when she can see him?"

"Oh! I quite forgot his request. But it does not seem to me that it would be well to put any additional strain upon her just now. Don't you think Mr. Egerton ought to wait until she is better able to bear it?"

"No; that would only be to reopen the wound when it was beginning to close. A little more or less in the way of endurance does not matter much at present, while the capability of suffering is almost paralyzed. She ought to be told now everything connected with the accident which she is ever to know. And this message of her father's she must, of course, hear. Egerton called during your absence, and at my request promised to return this evening if he finds himself well enough to make the exertion. I hoped that she would be here, and that he might thus discharge himself of a duty which he evidently feels to be very oppressive, and at the same time get the interview over for her. Of course it must be a very painful one on both sides."

"How is his arm to-day?"

"The surgeon considers it to be going on favorably; but he says that his whole body is one huge bruise, which makes movement difficult and excessively painful."

Glancing up to H  l  ne's face as he ceased speaking, D'Antignac read a thought in her eyes which brought a slight smile to his own. But he said seriously:

"How do we know that what appeared an idle whim, his tampering with Socialism and its expounders, may not prove to have been, if not providential, yet useful in its results? Useful as regards Armine's interests, at least; for I judge, from a few words which he dropped, that her father entrusted a message of great importance in connection with her future life to him. Now, if he had not accompanied Duchesne on this wild expedition, probably Duchesne would have died without having the opportunity of speaking. He survived the accident only about an hour, and all was confusion around. There was no one else near him in whom he could have reposed confidence."

"I hope," said H  l  ne a little drily, "that this message may not prove to be an attempt to exercise a posthumous tyranny over poor Armine."

CHAPTER XXIX.

EGERTON did not return that evening; but the next morning, at the earliest hour possible for a visit, he presented himself, asked first for Mlle. d'Antignac, and on learning that she was out gave his card, requesting that it might be taken to Mlle. Duchesne.

"But Mlle. Duchesne is not here, monsieur," said Cesco.

"Not here?" said the young man. "I understood from M. d'Antignac yesterday that she would be here in the evening."

The servant could only repeat the fact already stated: she was not here. An apartment had been prepared for her, but she had not yet come to take possession of it. Should he inquire if M. d'Antignac could see M. Egerton?

The latter hesitated a moment, then said no, he would not intrude on M. d'Antignac at that early hour; and, re-entering his *fiacre*, drove to the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs.

That his sensations were not enviable as he proceeded thither it may well be conceived. Hitherto his business in life had been to seek amusement; now he suddenly saw himself confronted by a stern and most disagreeable duty—a duty he had, gratuitously as it were, brought upon himself, inasmuch as he had put himself in the position which caused it to be demanded of him. Playing with fire is proverbially a dangerous amusement; and of this trite truth, as apposite to his association with Duchesne, he had been reminded often enough and earnestly enough for the warning to have produced some effect, if it had ever occurred to him to give a thought to such warning. The danger of entanglement on one side or illusion on the other was over for him, if it had ever existed; but he felt that the brief association with Duchesne, so idly formed and so tragically ended, was not a mere episode in his life, but an epoch, for it had left results that might in more than one way affect the whole of his future. Even before Duchesne's death the thought had several times occurred to him, with a surprise not untinctured by awe, that if he ever attained to Christian belief he would have to date the dawn of such belief from his acquaintance with this enemy of Christianity; since but for his acquaintance with Duchesne himself he would not have known Armine, and but for the strong impression made upon him by words that had fallen now and again from her lips, suggesting trains of thought and logical sequences never

before presented to his mind, the Catholic Church would have remained to him a *terra incognita* with which he was not likely to come into sufficiently unprejudiced contact for his intelligence to regard it impartially. It would be too much to say that the virtual act of faith made by him when Duchesne was dying merited that illumination of soul necessary to the full reception of Catholic truth. The act was but an instinctive impulse of the spiritual nature—the involuntary recognition of his Creator by the creature in a moment of strong emotion. During the period of intense bodily pain and nervous prostration which followed the very recollection of that lightning-flash of faith was forgotten; but only for the time. Light had irradiated the dark places of his soul once, and now he was not unwilling to say, "Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief."

On arriving at his place of destination he alighted once more, and, in very much what may be supposed to be the frame of mind of a man about to storm a battery, slowly and painfully mounted *au quatrième*.

On the stair he met Hélène, who was descending. She stopped and shook hands with him warmly, inquiring with interest about his health. "I don't know whether you are most to be condoled with or congratulated, Mr. Egerton," she said. "A broken arm and such severe bruising as you must have had are not trifles; but, considering the circumstances, I think you were fortunate to escape as you did."

"I think so, I assure you," he replied. "I have suffered very severely—more from the nervous shock than from actual pain, though that has not been inconsiderable. But, contrasting my lot with that of so many others, I feel that I was indeed fortunate."

"You are recovering from the effects of the shock, I hope?" she said, looking at him with kind sympathy.

"Somewhat," he answered. "But my nerves are very shaky yet. And I confess," he continued with a faint smile, "that I dread the interview before me. You have just left Mlle. Duchesne, I suppose?"

"Yes," she replied, her face taking an expression of gravity as she spoke.

"And will she receive me, do you know? You were kind enough, perhaps, to prepare her for my visit?"

"I came so early this morning specially for that purpose," she answered; "for I am ashamed to acknowledge that I forgot

to speak of it yesterday. Yes, she will receive you. But—" she hesitated; then, as he evidently waited for her to proceed, said: "I was going to beg you to make your communication as brief and as little painful as possible; but I am sure such caution is needless."

"It would be needless if I had any option in the matter," he replied. "But that, of course, I have not."

"Well, I must not detain you longer," she said kindly. "For your own sake, as well as hers, it is best that the meeting should be over as soon as may be. Good-morning."

"Good-morning," he responded; and they went their separate ways, he envying her in that she was not called upon to perform the task before him; she pitying him, and wishing him Godspeed in the same.

He was shown into the *salon*, and the first object that his eye rested on as he entered was the figure of Armine. Dressed now in deep black, she was standing motionless in the middle of the floor in an attitude as aimless as that of a lay figure. There was something, indeed, so unnaturally still and impassive in this attitude that Egerton unconsciously paused just within the threshold of the room and stood gazing at her in apprehensive wonder. And when, roused by the closing of the door after his entrance, she turned slowly toward him, he could scarcely repress an exclamation, so startled was he by the sight of her face. Hélène had been struck with surprise at the indefinable change in the girl; his predominant emotion was that of dismay.

Perceiving him, she advanced quietly and extended her hand, which he took without uttering a word; for he could think of no words that seemed fitting—nay, that would not sound to him oppressively commonplace. It was she who first broke the silence.

"I am sorry to see that you are suffering," she said.

Turning, she drew forward an easy-chair, motioned him toward it, then seated herself near and fixed her eyes on his expectantly.

All this was so different from anything that he had anticipated that his embarrassment became almost overpowering. He regarded her for an instant; then, making a desperate effort to recover the self-possession that was about to desert him entirely, answered:

"Yes, I am suffering. This is my excuse for not having waited on you before to-day, mademoiselle."

"Why should you have been in haste?" she said apathetically.

"I was in haste to fulfil a promise I had made," he answered, "and to execute a trust which had been laid on me."

"A trust?" she repeated; and now there was some quickening of attention in her eyes, though her manner was still without emotion.

"A trust," he repeated in turn. "I should never have thought of intruding upon you at present, nor conceived the idea of mentioning to you a subject so exquisitely painful as the one of which I have to speak, were I not constrained to do so by the express request of—your father."

His voice sank as he pronounced the two last words, which were uttered with so much reluctance that Armine said:

"Do not hesitate to speak freely. You cannot pain me. Pain no longer exists for me, I think. You wish to tell me something about my father?"

"Yes," said Egerton. "When dying M. Duchesne made to me a communication of great importance, adjuring me to deliver it to you without delay."

Then, in the fewest possible words, he repeated Duchesne's relation concerning the marriage of his grandfather.

It was a strange story, as he suddenly thought, for him, a young man, to be detailing to her, a young girl—embarrassing in every way; and he did not look toward her as he spoke until, at a slight exclamation when he first mentioned the name of De Marigny, he could not resist the temptation to observe her face.

"Ah!" she murmured to herself in a low tone, "I understand now. This explains many things."

It was as she said this that Egerton looked up. Was there, he wondered, any special interest to her in this discovery? Her face, when he permitted himself to glance at it, did not answer the question. It wore the expression of one who has suddenly grasped the solution of what had been a problem, but a problem of no great interest, seemingly. Egerton noted this and went on. But when he proceeded to speak of the proofs of the marriage, and remarked that he would charge himself with the duty of obtaining these proofs and taking all the legal steps required for establishing the fact of its validity, Armine stopped him.

"You have fulfilled the trust given you, monsieur, in telling me this family secret. But you will not be called upon to incur farther trouble. I shall not use the discovery. If my father had

lived it would have been right for him to claim his inheritance; and if I were a man *I* might feel it a duty to do so. As it is, I shall not move in the matter; and all that I ask of you is to hold inviolate the secret entrusted to you."

"But, mademoiselle," he cried earnestly, and with mingled surprise and disapproval, "you cannot mean that *you* do not intend to claim your inheritance!"

"That is what I mean," she answered.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "All other considerations apart, you will not, I am sure, disregard the imperative intention of your father to secure you against an evil of which you are no doubt ignorant as yet—one of the worst evils, if not the very worst, that beset any life, but especially that of a woman: the curse of poverty."

"I am in no danger of suffering from poverty," she replied. "My mother's fortune—which was not large, but is quite sufficient for my wants—was secured to me."

"But, mademoiselle," Egerton again eagerly began, when she interrupted him.

"I am the representative of my father," she said in a tone half-interrogative, half-asserting.

"Assuredly," he answered.

"The sole representative."

"Yes."

"It rests with me, then, to act or not in this affair; and I shall not act."

Again Egerton strove to speak, and again was stopped.

"It is altogether useless to discuss the subject," she said decidedly. "I mean what I have said. I shall not move in the matter."

"Not claim even your name?"

"Of course not, since to do that would be to proclaim the whole."

Egerton was silent a moment before he asked in a somewhat constrained tone:

"Do you mean, mademoiselle, that not even the Vicomte de Marigny is to be informed of this discovery?"

"Yes, monsieur, I mean that," she replied.

What was Egerton to do? He was not inclined for the controversy in which he so unexpectedly found himself engaged, but a sense of loyalty to the trust of the dead man made him feel bound to use every argument in his power; and, though he had not intended in this interview to press the claims

of humanity on Armine's filial conscience, he now felt driven to this.

"Permit me, mademoiselle," he said firmly but deferentially, "to remind you that the wishes of your father—I may, indeed, say his command—ought to have weight with you, and will, I am sure, when you have deliberately considered the subject, compel you to change your decision. I have still a direct message to deliver to you—"

He paused as Armine rose from her seat. Extending her hand with the motion of putting the whole question aside, she said:

"I will hear no more. Monsieur, I thank you for—for all." Coming to his side—he, too, had risen—she put out her own hand and grasped his, holding it as she went on: "Do not think me ungrateful. You have been a true and noble friend to my father. You have faithfully discharged the trust he placed in you. Is it not enough that you have done this? It is all that you can do."

When Egerton found himself again rattling along the streets of Paris he looked vaguely at the brilliance and glitter and rushing tide of life around him. Which was actual—the blue sky and sunshine, the gay splendor of the broad street and its hurrying crowds, or that quiet room with what seemed to him the almost spirit-like presence of the girl from whom he had a moment before parted? He felt a strange sense of bewilderment, as if he had seen one who was and yet was not Armine, together with a great consciousness of physical discomfort. Perhaps the last predominated; for at first he thought less of the interview just over than of his nerves and his stomach, both of which were making themselves sensibly and very prominently disagreeable. And, like all persevering claimants, their impotency presently gained attention to their wants by reminding him that he had taken no food that morning. He had, it is true, gone through the form before coming out, but had eaten nothing. At this recollection he stopped at a café and ordered breakfast; and while waiting for it to be served his thoughts naturally returned to Armine and the incidents of the morning.

If he had considered his position one of difficulty and embarrassment before speaking to her, he found it doubly so now. Chance—if chance it was—had brought him into a singular connection with this girl. From the first time he saw her there had been for him an indescribable attraction about her—a sort

of attraction which he had never met with in any other woman. And though Duchesne's dying trust had been cause of much anxiety to him, he had yet found a certain charm in the sense that he was thus tacitly constituted the guardian, if not of Armine herself, of Armine's interests. He speculated on what her sentiments regarding the matter might be, anticipating that she would feel pain if the assertion of her rights should seriously injure the fortune of the Vicomte de Marigny, and sure that, in any event, she would deal generously by her kinsman. But it never occurred to him to doubt her obedience to her father's behest, and so he had never considered what his own course of action must be in such a contingency. And now this contingency was upon him, and he felt utterly in doubt what to do.

It was not until he was leaving the café half an hour later that a thought came to him like an inspiration. He would go to D'Antignac, ask his advice, and enlist his influence with Armine.

Fortunately for him, it was one of D'Antignac's best days, and he was admitted at once.

"I have come to you for advice," he said, after answering very briefly D'Antignac's inquiries about his health. "I find myself in a most perplexing position about this business of poor Duchesne's. Will you let me tell you the story, which is a strange one, and then give me your opinion as to what you think I ought to do?"

"Tell me, by all means," said the other cordially. "My opinion and advice shall be heartily at your service; and, moreover, I will not quarrel with you if you do not take either after they are given," he added with a smile.

"Thank you," said Egerton; and he proceeded in the first place to repeat the relation which Duchesne when dying had made to him.

D'Antignac listened in silence, his expressive countenance indicating the strongest interest. Egerton saw, by a sudden quickening in the dark eyes as he began his narrative, that the fact of Duchesne's connection with the De Marigny name was not unknown to him; and there was a something between incredulity and anxiety in D'Antignac's face as the story went on. After repeating as literally as he remembered them the words of Duchesne, he was beginning to describe his interview with Armine when D'Antignac interposed.

"A moment," he said. "Pardon me, but have you made inquiries, obtained the proofs Duchesne spoke of?"

"Not yet," was the reply. "I have not had time, and have been, as you are aware, in no condition to make any exertion. But I purpose—or did purpose—to go to Dinan to-morrow and secure this proof."

"Don't you think," said D'Antignac, "that it would have been wise to have attended to these necessary preliminaries before saying anything to Armine on the subject?"

Egerton looked a little startled. "I see," he said, "that I have acted prematurely in speaking to her. Yes, you are right. I ought to have investigated the matter before saying a word to her about it. Duchesne may have been deceived, though I think not. He was too sagacious a man to permit himself to be misled either by his own hopes or the plausible representations of another. He was evidently so confident of the correctness of his information that I shall be surprised if the affair does not turn out exactly as he described."

"And Armine—how did she receive your communication?"

"In the most extraordinary way, it seems to me," answered Egerton; and he described at length the scene with her. "Whether such unaccountable conduct is attributable to her present state of mind I do not know. She is certainly very unlike in manner what she has heretofore seemed. I was amazed at the change I found in her; I was even shocked!"

"My sister tells me that she is greatly changed," said D'Antignac. "Which is not surprising," he added, "considering all that she must have suffered lately."

"But the alteration is greater than even the shock and horror of her father's death might be supposed to cause. In fact, I was appalled at the marvellous dissimilarity to her former self which she exhibited. It has left a singular impression on my mind; I cannot connect her as she was when I saw her last with her as she looked and spoke this morning. Two different individuals could not be more unlike."

D'Antignac looked grave, almost anxious. "Hélène tells me the same thing," he said. "Poor child! she must have suffered indescribably."

"To return to my own part of the business," said Egerton, "I think that I shall go to Dinan to-morrow, look into the matter—that is, obtain the necessary documents to establish the validity of the marriage."

"If they are to be obtained," interposed D'Antignac, with a smile.

"That of course," said Egerton; "and if they are not to be obtained I shall be quite reconciled to the fact, since Mlle. Duchesne takes the affair as she does. On my return—saying that I am successful in my search—I shall once more present the subject to her consideration; and I hope for your influence to induce her to listen more reasonably than she did this time. If she still persists in her present resolution, her obstinacy will lay an exceedingly disagreeable duty upon me. I promised Duchesne solemnly that I would do my utmost to secure his daughter's rights to her, and that promise I intend to keep. If the proofs are forthcoming—and I shall spare no pains to secure them—I will lay the matter before the Vicomte de Marigny. Don't you agree with me that this is what I ought to do?"

"Yes, that certainly is your proper course," answered D'Antignac. "But you spoke of going to Dinan to-morrow. Surely you are not in a condition to travel! Take my advice—you asked it, you know—and wait until you can at least move without pain, which I see you cannot do now."

Egerton smiled. "I should have to wait a month or so in that case, if the surgeon's opinion is to be relied on," he said; "and this would not suit me at all. I want to get the affair off my mind."

"Duchesne himself was in no haste to press the claim," said D'Antignac; "therefore I cannot see why you should disquiet yourself so much about a few weeks more or less."

"I am afraid that it is more my impatience to rid myself of the responsibility I feel than any special necessity for haste which urges me to action," replied Egerton. "However, there is, as you say, no reason why I should hurry myself beyond my strength; and so I may wait a few days before undertaking the expedition to Dinan, and to Marigny to look up the witness Duchesne spoke of. Meanwhile, I must not fatigue you longer"—he rose at the last word—"but I may come and tell you the result of my quest, may I not?"

"I was going to beg that you would," said D'Antignac, extending his hand in parting salutation. "To me, as you are no doubt aware, there is a double interest involved."

CHAPTER XXX.

EGERTON was proceeding very leisurely down the stair on his way out, his entire attention absorbed in his hold on the baluster and the direction of each step as he laboriously took it—for D'Antignac was not mistaken in thinking that it was a pain to him to move—when about half way down he encountered a lady whose approach he had been too preoccupied in thought to notice. He paused for her to pass, lifting his hat, but scarcely glancing at her; and it was only after she had passed that the idea of her identity dawned on him. He turned as he still stood where she had left him—turned so suddenly as almost to lose his balance—and looked after her. All that he saw was a tall, slight figure in deep mourning just disappearing from sight as his eye fell on it. Was it or was it not Armine? It struck him as rather a strange coincidence that, having met Mlle. d'Antignac an hour before as he was on his way to visit Mlle. Duchesne, he should now meet the latter here. But everything connected with Armine seemed strange now; and, after all, it had been arranged that she should come to the D'Antignacs. He was not certain that the figure of which he had obtained but a momentary glimpse was hers, but he thought so. And he was right.

D'Antignac's face still wore the look of anxiety which had followed the retiring form of his late guest when a low knock at his door half-startled him, it sounded so like Armine's familiar tap. Not conceiving that it could be her, it was with reluctance that, on a repetition of the knock, he responded, "*Entrez.*"

The door unclosed, and, putting aside her veil as she entered, the girl who had been so constantly in his thoughts of late advanced toward him.

Most things in this world happen differently from what one expects. D'Antignac was well aware of this truth, and had therefore formed no definite imagination—or thought he had formed none—of how Armine might appear when he saw her first. Hélène's description and Egerton's had prepared him to find in her an unusual, Egerton had said an extraordinary, change. He had looked forward to this first meeting with anxiety, eagerness, and, it must be confessed, with some curiosity; but he did not believe it possible that, prepared as he was for change, anything could surprise him. He was mistaken: he was surprised.

She came to his side with her accustomed quiet tread, and,

as he raised himself and held out his hand, she took it in the clasp of her own, saying :

"You see I have come to you."

He did not answer for a moment, but only held her hand and looked earnestly into the eyes that gazed down on him as she stood beside the couch. Then he said gently :

"I am glad that you have come. I would have gone to you if I could."

"I am sure of that," she said. "And, if I could, how gladly I would have come to you long ago! But I could not. And now—now that I am free—I feel as if I were dead; as if I had not a heart in my breast, but a stone. I do not know what is the matter with me. People say I am stunned; but I do not feel stunned. I feel simply dead—as if I should never be conscious of any sensation again. And it is awful to be alive and yet dead!"

"Sit down," said D'Antignac quietly—she was still standing—"and we will talk about this."

"Yes, I want you to talk to me," she said. "But let me stay close to you and hold your hand."

She knelt down by his side, resting her hand, which still clasped his strongly, upon the edge of the couch. There was so much force in the grasp of her fingers that he understood his sister's fear of a sudden convulsive reaction to this unnatural calm.

"I know what is the matter," he said, speaking with the utmost calmness and gentleness, "and it is not necessary that you should distress yourself by trying to tell me. You have been living in a state of tension for a long time, and the last terrible shock has for the present deadened sensation. It will wake again, never doubt that. There are hours and days of the most poignant suffering before you, though, indeed, I doubt whether there is any suffering worse than what you are enduring now. It is not strange—this state—after such a blow as has fallen on you. But the sharpest form of grief would be more easily borne."

"Oh! yes," she said, with a deep-drawn breath, "much more easily borne. For I should feel then that I was human."

He looked at the pale face with a faint, sad smile. "You human!" he said. "And do you not know that it is when a nature feels most acutely that such a result as this occurs? Tell me"—he paused for a moment—"when you heard of your father's death, how was it with you?"

"It was like a blow that struck me to the earth," she answered. "I remember nothing but the sense of being crushed by the awful horror, by the realization that I should never see him again and that he had parted from me in anger. Then came unconsciousness, and when I waked I was like this, cold and lifeless. I think it might have been different if I had been among those of whose sympathy I felt sure, if I had had even one friend near me. But, you see, I had not. I was with strangers, with people whom I disliked and dreaded, and what could my grief be to them? I believe they were frightened of me. At least they left me alone, and when I roused sufficiently to speak of leaving them they made no opposition. I think they were glad to let me go."

"And when you first felt yourself free where did you go?" asked D'Antignac.

"I went back to the only place I could call home," she answered—"to the apartment I had left with *him*, knowing so little how I would return."

"And then," he said, "where did you go?"

She looked surprised. "I have come here," she answered. "That is all."

"And so," said he slowly, "you have not been within a church."

She started as if he had struck her, and he saw her eyes dilate with the first look of anguish that had been in them.

"Oh! how could I?" she cried. "How could I use my freedom to do that which *his* last act endeavored to prevent? It would have seemed to me like treason to his memory."

"Poor child!" said D'Antignac. He did not otherwise answer these words for a minute or two; but presently he said gently, "And so the struggle still goes on—you are still torn in two, as it were, by a divided allegiance. Well, this is no time to preach to you, so I will only ask one question: to whom is your allegiance first due?"

"I suppose that I should say to God," she answered wearily. "But I do not feel that any more than I feel anything else. I think my faith is dead."

"And I am sure that you are mistaken," said D'Antignac. "Do you not still believe in the truths of faith?"

"Oh! yes," she answered indifferently. "I believe, but I do not feel at all. I have no longer any desire to practise what I believe. I cannot even pray. I think I am forsaken by God. And this is my punishment, no doubt, for fancying that

I was called upon to alienate and wound my father—my father, who had always been so good to me, and who went away, never to return, full of bitterness toward me.”

“My poor Armine!” said D’Antignac, “you are like one stricken unto death, torn and bleeding from a contest which has drained your heart’s blood, and you are not capable now of seeing anything in its true light and true proportions. When you alienated your father you were wounding yourself more deeply than you wounded him in an heroic effort to be true to God; and it is no more possible that the God whom you thus acknowledged should forsake you than that the sun should withhold its light. But you are ill in mind and spirit, and so you cannot feel this. The insensibility which seems to you so terrible is the natural result of long and intense emotion and struggle. Do not try to rouse yourself, for the very effort will defeat the end. Simply be quiet, and after a while light will shine through the darkness, and the voice of God will speak to your soul.”

She looked up at him gratefully. “*Your* voice gives me comfort,” she said—“the first I have felt. It seems to stir my frozen heart a little. But all is dark with me—very dark. My father can never give me another word of kindness or forgiveness; and if God had not withdrawn his face, if I could go back to the thoughts and feelings of a fortnight ago, what then must I think of my father? If I prayed, could I pray for *him*?”

“Why not?” said D’Antignac in the same grave, gentle tone which had such a tranquillizing influence upon her. Though he had not expected this question, he had known that it must occur to her and be one of the sharpest stings in her grief, and what he had to do was to apply such healing balm as he could; not words of comforting delusion, but such as the infinite charity of the church allows. “Why not?” he repeated after an instant. “If you did not, would you not be pronouncing a judgment upon him? But God alone is the judge of the soul, for he beholds it unveiled and reads motives where we see only actions.”

Oh! what pain and wistfulness were in the dark eyes as they looked up at him now, and what nervous strength was in the slender fingers that clasped his hand.

“But if—if such a soul had called itself the enemy of God,” she said in a tense whisper, “could one dare to hope—then?”

"Even then it is not for us to pass judgment," he answered. "For what are our judgments based upon? Surely the narrowest and most incomplete knowledge. Who can read another's mind and soul? Who can draw the line where prejudice and ignorance cease to be excusable? Only God, who weighs every human error in the scale of exactest justice and regards every human frailty with tenderest mercy. So let us leave the dead in his hands, with this absolute confidence: that every soul will in eternity occupy the place for which it is fitted, and that whatever good intention, whatever ignorance it may plead will most surely be allowed in its behalf."

Armine did not answer—in words; but she lifted the hand which she still held to her lips, and then they were silent together for a space of time which neither of them counted.

The silence was broken by the unexpected entrance of Hélène; and when she saw the slender, black-clad figure kneeling by her brother's couch she was for a moment fairly startled. Then she came forward with an exclamation of pleasure and welcomed the girl, who rose to meet her.

"You have not been a moment out of my mind since we parted," she said; "and I am more than glad to find you here. Now you must make up your mind to stay. Madelon can bring all that you need. You must not go away again."

"She must do exactly what she wishes," said D'Antignac's calm voice before Armine could answer. "Do not trouble her with insistence, if she does not wish to stay. Leave her quite free."

Armine gave him a glance of gratitude. "You are always as wise as you are kind," she said. "And, dear Mlle. d'Antignac, I will come to you after a while, as I have promised, since you are good enough to want me; but not to-day, I think."

Hélène shook her head. "To-day is a better time than to-morrow," she said. "But I will not press you, since Raoul says that I must not; though I think that sometimes people need a little compulsion for their own good."

"She needs something more just now," said D'Antignac. "Put on your bonnet, Hélène. I want you to go out with her."

Mlle. d'Antignac looked surprised; but she was in the habit of obeying her brother's directions without question, so she left the room, and when she returned with her bonnet

on she was struck by the expression of Armine's face. It was paler than before, if possible, but the strange, impassive calm was broken; the lips were tremulous instead of set, and the deep, dark eyes seemed full of immeasurable sadness. D'Antignac looked up at his sister and said quietly:

"Send Cesco to call a carriage, and then drive with her to Notre Dame des Victoires."

Several hours later, when Hélène returned, she entered her brother's room and found the Vicomte de Marigny with him. After she had shaken hands with the latter, D'Antignac said, with more eagerness than he often displayed:

"How did you leave Armine?"

"I left her in very good hands," Mlle. d'Antignac answered; "but you will not see her again for some time. She has gone to the — Convent."

"Indeed!" said her brother, with an expression of surprise. "By whose advice did she go?"

"Is it necessary to ask? By that of the Abbé Neyron, to whom you sent her."

"I did not send her to him," said D'Antignac quietly. "I did not mention his name."

"Did you not? Well, at all events, she so understood. We had not been long in the church when she turned to me and said that she would like to see him, if I thought it possible. I went to inquire, and fortunately found him disengaged, so I sent her to him, while I remained in the church. It seemed to me that I waited a long time; but presently she returned, and with her came the abbé, who told me when we went out together that he thought the best thing she could do would be to go to a religious house for a retreat, to tranquillize her and prepare her for the reception of the Sacraments. Of course I could not but agree with him, though it was a disappointment to me that she would not come to us; so he said he would go to the convent and arrange matters, while I went home with Armine and made such preparations as she needed. It did not take long to make these, and, to my surprise, I found her for the first time manifesting something like eagerness and interest. 'It is what I want,' she said: 'to get away from the world—not even to hear an echo of it—for a time.' So when we drove to the convent we found every arrangement made; she was received most kindly, and there I left her."

"You could not have left her in a better place," said D'An-

tignac with satisfaction. "This is all that I could have desired for her, and more than I could have hoped. Her wounds will be healed and her soul fortified there, and when we see her again she will be the Armine we have known given back to us. Meanwhile we can think of her with peace. The worst is over."

"She must have suffered terribly from the shock of her father's death," said M. de Marigny, who had listened to the conversation with interest and attention.

"Yes," answered D'Antignac, "and the shock was intensified by the circumstances immediately preceding it and by the fact that she was among unsympathetic people. Indeed, we have feared very serious consequences. She has been in the state of stunned apathy from which a reaction is often fearful. But now it is possible to dismiss anxiety. She is where she will be most wisely and carefully tended, and where she will find the rest and the religious atmosphere which she needs."

"But is it not possible that her father's friends may give trouble when they find that she has been taken to a convent?" asked the vicomte.

"I do not think there are any of her father's friends who have the right to interfere with her at all," replied D'Antignac. "She has, as far as I can learn, no relatives—here, at least—and she is therefore absolutely, though desolately, free."

"No relatives here!" repeated M. de Marigny, who seemed very much interested. "But no doubt she has relatives elsewhere."

"On her mother's side, very likely; but I do not know who or what they are. On her father's side—" Here the speaker paused and looked at Hélène, who rose at once, and, saying something about removing her bonnet, left the room.

There was a moment's silence after the door closed behind her, and then D'Antignac said:

"I feel bound to tell you, Gaston, that Duchesne left behind him a disclosure which concerns you very deeply. He professes to have discovered proofs of the marriage of his grandparents."

The vicomte looked surprised, but more incredulous. "At this late date," he said, "that is hardly probable. When and where did he discover the proofs?"

"It appears that he had never seen them himself, but that he believed in their existence on the testimony of the son of an old servitor of your granduncle who lives at Marigny. I suppose you know who the latter is?"

"Very well—an old pensioner of the estate, who has lately made some extravagant demands which were not granted. If he knew anything he might have revealed it, thinking that he would impose his own terms for the disclosure; but I doubt his knowing anything of any real importance."

"At least it is easy to put the matter to the test. He assured Duchesne that his father had witnessed the civil marriage, which took place at Dinan, where it must be registered."

"Oh!" said the vicomte, with an air of relief, "that brings the matter down to a point which can be easily verified. I shall go to Dinan at once."

"That is scarcely worth while, since another person intends going to-morrow," said D'Antignac, smiling.

"And who is that person, if I may ask—an agent of Mlle. Duchesne?"

"So far from that, a person who complains that he could not induce Mlle. Duchesne to manifest the least interest in the disclosure or to authorize him to take any steps whatever. But the matter having been laid upon him as a kind of trust by her father, he feels bound to discover, at least, whether the proofs of the marriage are forthcoming. There is no mystery connected with his part in the affair. He is the young American—Egerton—of whom you have heard me speak, who was with Duchesne at the time of the accident, and therefore received his last words."

"And it was to *him*, then, that the disclosure about the marriage was made?"

"Yes, to him, that he might convey it to Armine."

"And does it not strike you as strange that, if Duchesne believed the story of Lebeau, the old servant at Marigny, he did not verify it for himself—seek out the proofs and assert his claim at once?"

"No doubt he intended to do so, and thought, like many another man, that he had unlimited time in which to act. But, if you remember, the time which elapsed between his leaving Brittany and his death was very short."

There was a minute's silence. Then the vicomte said: "The matter must certainly be investigated at once. Will you give me the address of this M. Egerton?"

"If you will ring the bell, Cesco shall find you one of his cards," said D'Antignac. "Never having any need to pay visits, I do not burden my mind with remembering where people live. That is one advantage of being a fixture."

Cesco came; the card was speedily found, and the vicomte rose to go.

"If I decide to leave Paris immediately, I shall, of course, not see you again before I start," he said; "but I will let you know the result as soon as possible. Tell me this, however: did Mlle. Duchesne mention the matter to you?"

"To me? Not at all. It did not seem to be in her mind in the least. Set your mind at rest with regard to her. I can assure you of one thing: that if poor Duchesne's hopes prove absolutely baseless, no one will be less disappointed than Armine."

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHEN the news of Egerton's escape, and of the injuries which he had received in the railway accident, became known to his friends in Paris he naturally received many congratulations and condolences. Among these came a note from Mrs. Bertram expressing all things cordial in the way of concern, and ending with a few lines which made the young man smile: "Sibyl hopes with me that you will soon be able to come to see us. She is anxious to hear an account of your escape and of the sad fate of the person you were accompanying, in whom she is much interested."

"Much more than in me," said Egerton to himself, with the little sore feeling which Miss Bertram was always successful in exciting. It occurred to him to consider whether, had *he* been one of the victims of the accident, she would have been interested in his fate, and he decided that she would have said that "he died as he had lived, in the pursuit of a caprice." And it did not lessen the sting of this hypothetical judgment to feel that it would have been at least partially true.

He had at this time, however, things more serious to think of than Miss Bertram's opinion, depreciating or otherwise. M. de Marigny came to see him and treated the matter of Duchesne's claim in a spirit which pleased Egerton. "It is my affair now," he said, "to ascertain whether any proof of the marriage really exists; and, if it does exist, to secure to Mlle. Duchesne whatever rights may be hers. That is my right and duty as the head of the family; but I do not mean to interfere with *your* right of friendship, M. Egerton, and if you care

to go down into Brittany with me I shall be happy to offer you the hospitality of the château."

"You are exceedingly kind," said Egerton; "but my position is a little embarrassing, and I hardly feel that I have any right to interfere in the matter farther. From M. Duchesne I had only the charge to tell his daughter of what he believed to be certain facts. And when I told her, so far from requesting me to verify those facts, she requested me most positively to take no steps in the affair. But, M. d'Antignac's advice coinciding with my own opinion, I felt bound to take at least the step of finding whether there was any proof of the civil marriage, and, in case there was, of informing you—the person most nearly concerned—of the fact. Since you, however, have been informed, and since you mean to take the investigation into your hands, I do not feel that any obligation rests upon me to go into the matter farther."

"An obligation—no," said the vicomte. "There is certainly not the least obligation resting upon you. But nevertheless I think it would be best if we made these investigations together. As I am supposed to represent my own interest, there should be some one to represent Mlle. Duchesne's; and since you are the person to whom her father made the disclosure—"

"That was only an accident," interposed Egerton.

"Granted; but still an accident which puts you in the position of being the only person sufficiently well informed to act for his daughter."

"Who most decidedly declined to allow me to act for her."

"Granted again; but remember that she was not probably in a state of mind or feeling to decide properly on any question. Over her father's grave it seemed to her, no doubt, very useless to consider whether he had ever a right to call himself by another name. She overlooked altogether her own interest in the matter; but we must not overlook it."

"I suggested her own interest," said Egerton, "and she refused to consider it at all."

The vicomte made a little gesture signifying that this did not matter. "She is a woman," he said, "a young woman, and in deep grief. We must act for her. Or rather, I shall find out, on abstract grounds, what is the true state of the case; and then it will be time enough to think of acting. Meanwhile there is no special reason for haste. I have just heard that she has gone into a convent for a retreat—which

will last for a fortnight at least—and, therefore, if by delaying my departure for a few days I can induce you to go with me down into Brittany, I shall willingly do so. You must feel very much shattered now, and I doubt if you find the prospect of a railroad journey desirable.”

“I confess,” said Egerton, “that I shrink from the thought of it; and yet I confess also that I should like to see the end of this matter, since the beginning of it has been forced upon my knowledge. But I hesitate to let you delay your journey on my account. I should think that you would be in haste to know—the best, or worst.”

“On the contrary,” said the vicomte, “I feel no impatience and very little concern. It is difficult to tell what is best and what is worst in any temporal affair of life; but it can never be other than well that truth should be known and justice done. I desire simply to know the one and to accomplish the other.”

“Then, if you really do not object to delaying your journey for a few days, I should like very much to accompany you.”

“With the prospect of your companionship, I shall be happy to delay it,” M. de Marigny replied, with true French courtesy. “We will go, then, next week. The day can be hereafter appointed, for I shall do myself the pleasure of calling again to see how you improve.”

This improvement was rapid, since Egerton’s injuries, with the exception of his arm, were not serious. He was looking very pale, however, and quite like a man who had passed through a trying experience of one kind or another, when he finally made his appearance in Mrs. Bertram’s drawing-room. It was not her reception-day—he had taken care to avoid that—but nevertheless he found a group engaged in drinking tea, who all rose eagerly at sight of him. He had a swift impression of familiar faces—Miss Dorrance’s and Mr. Talford’s among the number—even while he was shaking hands with Mrs. Bertram and receiving her cordial welcome. Then there was a hubbub of congratulations and inquiries for several minutes; and then, missing one person, he looked around.

Sibyl was standing quite near, but a little behind him, leaning one arm on the back of a tall chair and observing with a smile the scene of which he was the centre. As his eye met hers she at once held out her hand.

“I have only been waiting an opportunity to add my con-

gratulations to the rest," she said. "But will you not sit down? I think you look a little tired. Pray take this chair, and I will bring you a cup of tea."

Egerton took the chair, and, somewhat to his surprise, Miss Bertram brought him a cup of tea with her own hand, wheeled quickly and deftly a little table forward for the cup to rest upon, and then sat down by him, "to be near in case you need assistance," she said, smiling.

"You are very kind," he answered; "but I have already begun to be tolerably independent of assistance. It is, of course, awkward to have only one hand available; but my arm is getting on very well, and when I consider—"

"Yes," she said as he paused, "I should think that when you consider you would feel yourself to be most fortunate."

"I feel it so keenly," he said, "that I am oppressed by the consciousness. Why should *I* have been spared, and not only spared in the preservation of my life, but comparatively uninjured, when others—it is something I can hardly dwell upon! Yet the question is constantly recurring to me: why should it have been *I*, and not *they*?"

There was a moment's silence. Miss Bertram seemed unable to suggest any answer to the question; but she looked at the young man keenly, and presently said:

"But I do not think that you escaped scathless. Apart from *that*"—she glanced at his helpless arm—"you give me the idea of one who has suffered. You are greatly changed since I saw you last."

"The shock was terrible," he said, "and the nervous suffering afterward very great. But the change may be owing to something besides physical causes. A man could scarcely pass through such an ordeal—could hardly feel himself face to face with the most terrible form of death—and be quite the same afterward."

"Some men could, I think."

"A very shallow nature might, perhaps. But I"—he smiled a little—"though I make no pretensions to great depth, am not, at least, so shallow as that."

"I hope you do not imagine that I thought so," she said quickly. "It seems to me that it would—that it must—make a lasting impression. And then to see your companion killed by your side—but forgive me! Perhaps I ought not to force you to talk on such a subject."

Egerton would have been glad if she had chosen another; but he remembered Mrs. Bertram's note, and what had been said therein of Sibyl's interest in the fate of Duchesne, so he felt in a manner bound to gratify that interest.

"It is a subject which I find it difficult to banish from my mind," he answered. "Even in my dreams it returns to me. The death of Duchesne was indeed most terrible; yet I can give you no idea of the iron nerve and fortitude of the man. He talked to me of matters concerning worldly affairs almost up to the moment of dissolution."

"And at the moment," said Sibyl. "It is *that* I have been curious about. I have wondered if his faith in humanity had power to sustain him *then*."

"He did not seem to need sustaining," said Egerton. "And, since he died with the words *Vive l'humanité* on his lips, you may imagine that his faith in it, or at least his devotion to it, was as strong in death as in life."

"But, under the circumstances, did not that seem unnecessary and—and almost theatrical?" she asked. "If he had been about to be shot there would have been some reason for proclaiming his faith in that manner. But why should he have done so, dying as he did?"

Egerton hesitated. All around them was a ripple of gay talk and light laughter; tea-spoons clinked against delicate china cups, silk dresses rustled, sunshine streamed over it all—how could he speak *here* of that solemn moment, charged with the issues of eternity, when he had recalled the thought of God to the dying Socialist and evoked the defiance of which he had spoken? His hesitation was only momentary, for before he decided what to say Sibyl spoke quickly.

"Do not answer, Mr. Egerton," she cried. "I see that you are reluctant to do so, and it is inexcusable of me to question you in such a manner. My apology must be that you told me so much of M. Duchesne's devotion to his ideal that I have wondered how it stood the test of death."

"It stood the test triumphantly, so far as his sincerity was concerned," Egerton answered. "I never doubted but that it would. There was no leaven of hypocrisy or self-seeking in the man. He was an honest and passionate enthusiast."

Miss Bertram was silent for a moment, then she said slowly: "I wonder how much of an excuse for error such sincerity of conviction is, granting that there is a life to come and that we need excuse in it?"

Egerton shook his head. "That question is rather too deep for me," he replied. "Suppose you ask M. d'Antignac? He will give you a precise answer—I have never known him fail in that—and a precise answer is something so rare that it is refreshing to hear it, whether one accepts it or not."

"One generally feels constrained to accept M. d'Antignac's answers," said Sibyl.

Egerton was about to ask how much of D'Antignac's answers on some subjects she had been constrained to accept, when the conversation was interrupted by the approach of Miss Dorrance, who came and sat down on his other side.

"I cannot let Sibyl monopolize you, Mr. Egerton, when we have *all* been so interested and so anxious about you," she began. "I wonder if you have any idea what a visitation you escaped? When we first heard of your having been injured in the accident we were so concerned that we talked—mamma, and I, and Mrs. Bertram, and several more of your friends—of going to pay you a visit to condole with and entertain you. But Cousin Duke threw cold water on our project—said you would not care at all to see us; that it would be a 'nuisance' to a man who had been cut to pieces, and battered and bruised, for a set of women to descend upon him; and so we gave it up."

"Mr. Talford must have been filled with jealousy at the thought of seeing me so distinguished," said Egerton. "I cannot imagine any other reason for his giving such an opinion. I assure you that I should have been delighted to see you, and flattered beyond measure by such an attention."

"Would you, indeed? It was too bad, then, of Cousin Duke to interfere," said she. "And Sibyl agreed with him, too."

"I agreed that Mr. Egerton would probably regard such a visit in the light of a nuisance," said Sibyl; "and I still think so."

"I don't know how to prove that you are wrong," said Egerton, "except by retiring to my rooms, feigning a severe relapse, and sending to beg that you will all take pity on me."

"Ah!" said the young lady, smiling, "but the feigned relapse would be the point of difference. A visit of the kind might be pleasant enough under those circumstances; but to a man who really had been 'cut to pieces, and battered and bruised,' as Laura says, I am sure that receiving half a dozen women could not be agreeable."

"I am not so modest," said Miss Dorrance. "It never oc-

curred to me that Mr. Egerton would not be charmed to see us; and another time I mean to carry out my idea."

"Pray do!" said Egerton. "If I should have the misfortune to be the victim and survivor of another railroad catastrophe I shall certainly look for a visit from you."

"It would be a very high price to pay for such a pleasure," said Miss Bertram. "Let us hope that your gallantry may not be put to the test."

She rose as she spoke and walked away, and while Egerton looked after the tall, graceful figure Miss Dorrance said in a confidential tone:

"It was really Sibyl's fault that we did not go. We should not have minded Cousin Duke's opinion, but she endorsed it so strongly that both Mrs. Bertram and mamma gave the matter up; and then, you know, what could I do?"

"We might have passed it off as an American custom, if you had come to see me alone," said Egerton, laughing. "At least I feel very much defrauded, and I shall certainly have the matter out with Talford at the first opportunity. Meanwhile I am glad to hear that your mother has recovered sufficiently even to take into consideration a visit of the kind."

"Oh! mamma is vastly improved; and, since she was not allowed to go to see you, she will be delighted if you will come to see her."

"I shall certainly give myself that pleasure. My first visit when I return to Paris shall be paid to her."

"When you return to Paris!" repeated Laura, with surprise. "Are you going away?"

"Only for a short distance and a short time," he answered. "And if by thus tempting fate I am blown up again I shall certainly expect you to fulfil your promise of coming to see me."

Miss Dorrance regarded him for a moment with a very curious scrutiny. Then she said frankly: "I confess I am interested in you, Mr. Egerton. I think you must be engaged in something very romantic and mysterious. Sudden journeys, terrible accidents, dark and desperate companions—I think Cousin Duke must be right in his idea that you have become a deeply-dyed Socialist, full of plans to blow up emperors and what not."

"It is very kind of Mr. Talford to destroy my reputation for good sense—not to speak of good morals—in that way,"

said Egerton, half-amused, half-annoyed. "But I assure you that if no emperor is blown up until I have a hand in his assassination, they will all die peaceably in their beds. As for the journey I am about to make, it is of a most inoffensive, private character."

"But your last journey—you were going to attend a Socialist meeting *then*, were you not?" persisted the young lady.

"As a mere matter of curiosity and amusement—yes," answered Egerton, who began to regret the publicity which he had given to his vague, socialistic sympathies. "But I think that I have been quite sufficiently punished," he added, glancing down at his arm.

Miss Dorrance probably agreed with him, for she did not pursue the subject, and he was able before long to effect his escape. But it met him again when he went up to Miss Bertram to make his adieux.

"I have been thinking a good deal," the latter said in a low tone, "of the young girl—Mlle. Duchesne—of whom I have heard you speak several times. How terrible the shock of her father's death must have been to *her*!"

"It was," answered Egerton. "One can judge of that by the change it has made in her."

"You have seen her, then?" said Miss Bertram, with a quick glance at him.

"Necessarily," he replied. "I was not only with her father when he died, but I received his dying wishes to transmit to her."

"But I judged, from something which I heard Mlle. d'Antignac say, that there was some doubt or mystery about her whereabouts."

"There was for a time a little doubt, but no mystery. Her father, in order to remove her from all religious influences, had placed her with some friends of his, and the D'Antignacs did not for some time know her address. But after the news of her father's death these people made no effort to detain her, and when I saw her she had returned to her usual place of residence."

"If matters had reached such a point between father and daughter as that," said Sibyl, after a moment's pause, "perhaps it was as well he was killed."

Egerton could not repress a smile at her tone of reflective consideration. "I was very sorry for poor Duchesne," he

said, "but I fear that no friend of his daughter could resist arriving at such a conclusion."

"And now that she is free, what does she mean to do—become a Catholic?"

"At once, I believe. She is in a convent now, to prepare for the step."

"Ah!" said Miss Bertram. "But I am sure you will not allow her to remain there."

"I have nothing whatever to do with it," said Egerton, with some surprise.

"Have you not?" She gave him another quick glance. "I thought perhaps you had been invested with some rights of guardianship. At all events, I shall depend upon you to obtain for me a glimpse of this interesting young lady sooner or later."

After taking his departure Egerton pondered a little on these words, which, he decided, could have only one meaning—that Miss Bertram supposed him to be in love with Armine. It was not a new idea to him that he might be; as we are aware, it had occurred to his mind before, and not only occurred to it, but been entertained and agreeably dwelt upon. Yet it had *not* occurred to him that any one else would suspect a sentiment of the existence of which he was by no means sure himself; and therefore Miss Bertram's penetration surprised him, and, for some curious reason, did not please him. Certainly, if he had ever been accused of being in love with Sibyl Bertram, he would have repudiated the idea; yet he had always been conscious of a strong attraction toward her, of hovering, as it were, on the brink of a fancy into which a little graciousness on her part might have precipitated him. But, instead of being gracious, she had always repelled him—in a very subtle fashion, it is true, but a fashion which he clearly appreciated, and which was peculiarly trying to his self-love. He had long been aware that the sore feeling which her depreciation excited was a proof of her power to move him, and he never approached her without acknowledging the charm of her strongly-marked and interesting character; yet he had not suspected himself of any sentiment which could account for the mental twinge which it cost him to realize that she had in imagination coolly handed him over to Armine. "Surely one is a mystery to one's self!" he thought. And then, more sensibly, "Surely I am a fool!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

ACCORDING to his promise, Egerton went down into Brittany with M. de Marigny as soon as his attendànt physician pronounced him able to travel; and those who were left behind in suspense—to wit, M. and Mlle. d'Antignac—heard nothing of them for some time.

Meanwhile Armine remained in the convent where she had been placed, and was reported by the Abbé Neyron as improving daily in physical health and spiritual peace. He came to talk with D'Antignac concerning her, and seemed more and more impressed with her character as it revealed itself to him. "It is a remarkable soul," he said, "and one with which I think God must have special designs."

"I have always thought so," D'Antignac answered quietly. "But what do you take those designs to be, M. l'Abbé?"

The discreet priest shook his head. "It is not yet possible to tell," he answered; "and there is no need for haste in trying to decide. God in his own time makes his will clear with regard to each human soul. The trouble is that so few souls are anxious simply to fulfil that will; they have their own plans and desires, which they prefer to God's. But this soul, I think, will be willing to take his way."

"Dear Armine!" said Mlle. d'Antignac. "She has always thought so little of herself or her own desires that I am sure you are right. And when will she be received into the church?"

"There is nothing of the kind necessary," replied the abbé. "She was received into the church at her baptism—her mother, it seems, was a good Catholic and had her baptized in her infancy—and she has never in word or deed renounced the faith. Consequently, she has only to make her First Communion. She has already made her general confession."

"And when will she make her First Communion?"

"To-morrow morning in the convent chapel. I have an invitation for you, dear mademoiselle, to be present; and afterward you can arrange with Mlle. Duchesne about her plans."

"My arrangement is easily made, or rather has been already made," said Hélène. "I shall bring her home with me."

"It will be the best arrangement—for a time," said the abbé.

It was an arrangement to which Armine made no objection, though she, too, qualified her acceptance with the words, "for a time." She seemed happy at the thought of being with her friends, and especially of seeing D'Antignac; yet H  l  ne noticed how wistfully she turned and glanced back into the quiet convent court as they were passing out of the gateway to the street beyond. "I had never known peace until I found it here," she said in a low tone; "and such peace!" Then she looked at her companion. "Do you remember," she went on, "how when M. d'Antignac told me that I must not return to him again, I said that I felt like one who was exiled from Paradise? I have the feeling still more strongly to-day."

"I can understand it," said H  l  ne; "for here *is* the only foretaste of Paradise to be known on earth, and I have had the same feeling when I left one of these abodes of peace to go back to the jarring and distracted world."

"But *we* are going to M. d'Antignac," said Armine, as they entered the carriage waiting for them, "and I am always conscious of the same atmosphere of peace surrounding him."

It was indeed a happy meeting between the two, who had been faithful in affection to each other so long, when they met without any farther need for separation; when Armine could tell D'Antignac all that she had been thinking and feeling, sure of absolute sympathy and comprehension, and when he could note all the change that had been wrought in her—the great change since the day when, in her grief and despair, she had come and knelt down by him, asking for help. *Now* the light of spiritual peace was in her eyes and on her face, and, though much of the sad sense of loss was revived by the familiar objects which surrounded her, it could not rob her of that deep and abiding joy of the soul which is the first result of the sacraments.

Not as a stranger, but as one who had long known the life of which she was now to form a part, the girl settled into her place in the small household and soon made herself a useful member of it. But, while she was always ready to aid H  l  ne in any way, she chiefly liked whatever enabled her to serve D'Antignac; and perceiving this, H  l  ne resigned to her various duties which brought her into attendance on him. Of these, one which she enjoyed most was reading to him for an hour or two in the morning; and she was engaged in this manner one day when the *timbre* of the apartment sounded,

and a moment later Cesco entered, saying that Mlle. Bertram begged to know if M. d'Antignac would receive her.

"Yes," said D'Antignac; "ask her to enter." And then he said to Armine, who rose instinctively: "Do not go. This is some one whom I should like you to meet."

Armine might have remonstrated had there been time, but as she paused the door opened and a tall, handsome young lady, who gave the impression of something at once majestic and winning, came in. The fashionable richness of her dress might with some people have been the first thing which struck the eye; but costume was never more than an adjunct to Sibyl Bertram's beauty, and Armine saw the sweet, cordial smile and clear, brilliant glance rather than Virot's hat and Félix's dress.

Sibyl on her part was struck, as soon as she entered, by the slender, black-clad figure standing against the light, by the side of D'Antignac's couch, and she knew at once who it must be. One quick glance, however, was all that she permitted herself as she walked forward and clasped the hand that D'Antignac held out.

"I hope you have not allowed me to derange you, as our French friends say," she remarked, with a smile. "It has been so long since I have seen you that I could not resist the inclination to make an effort, at least, to do so."

"I am very glad that you did not resist the inclination," he answered. "I am always happy to see you when I am able to see any one; and by coming just now you give me not only the pleasure of seeing you, but also the pleasure of making two of my friends known to each other. Will you let me present Mlle. Duchesne? Armine, this is Miss Bertram."

The two young women—so different in character, circumstances, and association—regarded each other for an instant, and then by an impulse Sibyl held out her hand.

"I am glad to meet Mlle. Duchesne," she said in her frank voice. "I have heard a great deal of her."

Armine glanced at D'Antignac with a smile. "My friends here are very kind, I know," she said.

Miss Bertram regarded her for a moment longer before she replied. Then she said: "It is not only from your friends here that I have heard of you. The first person whom I heard speak of you was Mr. Egerton, who has talked of you a great deal."

D'Antignac was not surprised that Armine seemed to shrink

at the sound of a name so lately connected with the tragedy which had such cruel meaning for her. She grew a shade paler, and her eyes seemed to gather a deeper shade of wistful expression. After an instant's pause she answered:

"I know Mr. Egerton, but not very well; and I cannot imagine why he should have talked of one of whom *he* knows so little."

"I think he fancies that he knows a good deal," said Miss Bertram. "It is one of Mr. Egerton's peculiarities"—the slightly mocking tone of her voice just here would have been very familiar to Egerton's ear had he heard it—"to believe that he reads character with unusual penetration."

"He certainly brings an unusual degree of sympathy to bear upon it," said D'Antignac's quiet voice; "and the truest penetration is that which is derived from sympathy."

"Yes, Mr. Egerton is very sympathetic," said Armine. "He feels, he understands so quickly. I have observed that."

"I see that he has two very good friends," said Sibyl, smiling. She sat down and looked at D'Antignac. "I am not sympathetic," she said. "I make dreadful mistakes about people, and I often feel as if I were horribly obtuse. How can one learn sympathy?"

"I think you do yourself injustice in fancying that you do not possess it," he answered. "If you really want to learn, however, there is one way—cultivate comprehension."

"But if I had to define sympathy I should say that it *was* comprehension."

"Not exactly. They are only very closely allied. One cannot have sympathy without comprehension, but it is quite possible to have comprehension without sympathy."

"I always hesitate to disagree with you, M. d'Antignac, because you know everything so much better than I do," said Armine; "but it seems to me that it is impossible to have comprehension without sympathy. If we thoroughly comprehend why a person feels or believes a thing very strongly, even though we may condemn the belief, we may understand *his* point of view, *his* motive and meaning; and is not that sympathy?"

"Yes," D'Antignac answered, knowing well of what she was thinking, "that is sympathy in the truest sense which we feel for those with whom we differ, and it certainly has its basis in an enlightened comprehension. To compare earthly with heavenly things," he added, not unwilling to change the

subject somewhat, "such sympathy reminds me of the divine charity of the church toward the adherents of error. While for the error itself she has sternest and most uncompromising condemnation, she has infinite compassion for those who are misled by it. And that is the spirit which, as far as possible, we should imitate."

"Only we may sometimes make mistakes about condemning error," said Sibyl.

He looked at her with a smile. "We shall most undoubtedly do so if we make our own opinion the standard for our judgment," he said. "There is hardly an affair of life, and certainly not a question of importance, either political or social, which we do not need to try by a standard that knows no variation, that is never swayed by thought or fear of man."

"Such a standard is what I have always instinctively longed for," she said. "Yet I wonder if you know the feeling of revolt—as if one were surrendering one's liberty—which one who has been reared in Protestantism feels at the thought of submitting to the absolute authority of the Catholic Church?"

"I do not know it from experience," he answered, "for, thanks to the mercy of God, I have always belonged to the household of faith. But I have observed it very often in others, and to me there is no more striking proof of the 'darkness of our understanding' which theology teaches is one of the three consequences of original sin. For what save a hopeless darkness of the understanding could make men prize the liberty of remaining in ignorance and of formulating error? Does any man of sense, when he is offered scientific knowledge and such certainty as science can afford, reject it in order to retain the 'liberty' of making wild guesses and forming wild theories on a basis of no knowledge at all? Yet what is any scientific certainty compared to the certainty of a truth which has been revealed by God? Yet this truth—in a matter so vital as eternal salvation—men reject for the liberty of entertaining vague opinions and being 'carried to and fro by every wind of doctrine.' Surely the world has never seen such another proof of human folly!"

"It is strange," said Sibyl musingly. "One might think that people would be at least as eager to obtain certainty in a matter so important as they show themselves with regard to worldly knowledge. But so far from that, how indifferent they are! How little earnestness they display! One is tempted to

think that earnestness died out of the world with the mediæval saints."

D'Antignac shook his head, smiling a little. "You draw wide conclusions from narrow premises," he said. "I grant that earnestness such as you mean has no place in your world—the world of a society which is essentially pagan, with a thin veneer of conventional Protestantism over it—but it has not left earth with the mediæval saints. Ask Armine if she has not lately seen some of it in the convent where she has been staying."

"Ah! mademoiselle," said Armine, as Sibyl looked at her, "if you could see the life of that convent as I have lately seen it, you would not think that the saints had left the earth."

"Or rather she would realize that they have in all ages spiritual descendants," said D'Antignac. "I think that Miss Bertram might find interest in a visit to a convent. You have never met any *religieuses*?" he added, addressing Sibyl.

"No," she answered, "I have never met any, and I confess that I would like to visit a convent very much indeed."

"I am sure that Héléne would be delighted to take you," he said. "She has an extensive acquaintance in the religious world. Or here is Armine, who could introduce you into the convent which she has just left."

"If I might take the liberty, I should be delighted to do so," said Armine.

"Here comes Héléne," said D'Antignac, as his sister entered. "We will hear what she has to say of it."

Héléne had to say that she would take Miss Bertram to visit a convent with pleasure. "We will appoint a day," she said, addressing the latter, "and I will not only show you a convent, but also some of the most charming women in the world."

Miss Bertram declared that any day would suit her, so the next afternoon was appointed for a visit to the convent which Armine had lately left. "I know that Armine is by this time anxious to see her friends again," Mlle. d'Antignac said, smiling.

Armine admitted that she would be glad of an opportunity to do so, and after a little more discussion Miss Bertram rose to go. "I am sorry that I cannot stay longer," she said, in reply to a remonstrance from Héléne, "but I left mamma at the Magasin du Louvre and promised to bring the carriage back for her in half an hour. But I shall come to-morrow

afternoon—there is no fear of my failing in that. And then, or at another time, M. d'Antignac, I shall hope to hear some more practical directions about cultivating sympathy. Adieu, mademoiselle; I am happy to have met you."

The last words were uttered very graciously to Armine, and in the ante-chamber, where Hélène accompanied her, the speaker added: "What an exquisite face Mlle. Duchesne has! It is like a poem, as I think I have heard Mr. Egerton remark. I do not wonder now that he has been so enthusiastic about her."

"Has he been enthusiastic?" said Hélène, smiling a little, "I did not know that he had seen much of her. He was specially fascinated with her unhappy father."

"I have always had a suspicion that the fascination was with *her* rather than with her father," said Sibyl. "And I can only repeat that since I have seen her I do not wonder. Now *au revoir*, dear mademoiselle. Look for me certainly to-morrow."

"I have discovered something," said Mlle. d'Antignac to her brother a few hours later. "Miss Bertram believes that Mr. Egerton is in love with Armine."

"Does she?" said D'Antignac quietly. "It may be so. Things more unlikely have happened. And probably Miss Bertram is a good judge of the signs of the tender passion."

"Do you think it can be true?" said Hélène after a pause.

"I do not know," her brother answered. "I have never seen him with her, nor has he often spoken to me of her. I find it quite credible that any man should be in love with Armine. That is all I can say."

"I should find it more credible for one to be in love with Sibyl Bertram," said Hélène. "She is to me a peculiarly charming person."

"She is a very attractive person to me," said D'Antignac, "but not charming like Armine. However, that is my individual taste. Then I fancy Miss Bertram might prove very *difficile*. That often deters a man from falling in love."

"I thought a man was generally animated by difficulty."

"That depends on the man. He may not care for difficulty, or there may be too much of it. But you may be sure of one thing," added the speaker, with a smile; "if Egerton is in love with either we shall soon discover it; for you know the proverb, '*L'amour et la fumée ne peuvent se cacher.*'"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE next afternoon D'Antignac was alone, lying quietly on his couch after seeing the party of ladies start off for the — Convent, when the sound of the door-bell was followed a moment later by the entrance of M. de Marigny.

D'Antignac's pale, calm face brightened with pleasure, as it always did at sight of this nearest and dearest of all his friends, and he held out his hand with a gesture of welcome.

"One values a pleasure more for its unexpectedness," he said. "I did not know you had returned to Paris."

"I have only been in Paris a few hours," the other answered. "I have come here at once. Do I not always come here before I go anywhere else? But to-day I have come with important news."

"Indeed!" said D'Antignac. He looked keenly at the other's face, as if to determine the character of the news before hearing it. There was certainly no indication of bad news in the serene and slightly smiling expression of the countenance. "It is as I expected," he said. "You have found that there was no foundation for Duchesne's belief."

M. de Marigny drew a chair forward and sat down, smiling a little more. Then he said quietly: "*Au contraire*. I have found his story correct in every particular."

"Is it possible?" said D'Antignac. He lifted himself to a sitting position, as if, in the eagerness of his interest, unable to remain recumbent. "Do you mean," he said, "that Duchesne was really the heir to the title and estates of Marigny?"

"I mean," answered the vicomte calmly, "that he had a very good case to carry into a court of law, and might have been declared the true Vicomte de Marigny. But, again, he might not. I have obtained a legal opinion upon the case, and I am told that the issue would be extremely doubtful. The marriage is to be found registered as Duchesne was told—that is, the marriage of a Henri Marigny and Louise Barbeau. But it is necessary to prove that this Henri Marigny was Henri Louis Gaston, Vicomte de Marigny, and the only witness of the marriage is long since dead. We have, it is true, the second-hand testimony of his son, and the court would decide upon the value of that testimony. The end is this: if Duchesne were living I should contest his claim, and I doubt whether he would succeed in establishing it. But, since he is dead, the case is different."

"Why?" asked D'Antignac.

"For the simple reason that it would have been impossible to surrender to him without a struggle property which he would have used in the worst of causes. But with his daughter the matter is different. I have no doubt it will be possible to make an amicable arrangement with her. I shall lay the case before her as it stands, counsel her to take legal advice and to determine what she will accept, or whether she will have her case decided by law."

"Then even in *her* case you would contest the claim, if brought for the whole estate?"

"I should have no alternative but to do so. My duty to those who are to come after me would demand it. A man who has inherited an old name and an old estate occupies a different position to that of one who has made his own fortune and, in a certain sense, his own name. The former, at least, is his own to do what he will with. But one who occupies the place of succession in an old line is no more than a trustee. What was handed down to him he should hand down intact, as far as may be, to those who are to come after him. And therefore, as the guardian of interests not his own, he cannot surrender any part of an inheritance which it is his in a special manner to protect, without absolute assurance of the justice of the claim—such an assurance as only the decision of a high legal authority can give."

"I understand your position," said D'Antignac. "You are bound for the sake of others to think of justice rather than of quixotic generosity. Yet, from your speaking of an 'amicable arrangement' with Armine, I judge that you think her claim would be just."

"Yes," he answered, "I think that she has a claim, though whether it can be legally supported is another question. There is a very good moral certainty that a marriage took place, which, though only a civil marriage, would, I presume, be held binding by the church. That being the case, she is a daughter of the house, and therefore I should be within the bounds of my duty in allowing her whatever was just and right."

D'Antignac lay back on his pillows. "I do not think," he said quietly, "that Armine will accept anything."

"But why should she not—as a right?" asked the other. "There is no question of generosity in the matter, no room for scruples. Either she has a right or she has not. If she has, why should she hesitate to accept it?"

"She will tell you herself," answered D'Antignac. "My opinion is merely an instinct; yet I have never found my instincts with regard to Armine wrong."

"But on what ground do you think her likely to refuse?"

"That I do not know. She has not spoken of the matter at all to me. I can only repeat that I have an instinct that she will refuse to press any claim or to take anything."

"But I am told by M. Egerton that it was her father's dying charge that she should do so."

"Poor Armine!" said D'Antignac. "Was it not enough for her to have suffered all that she did from her father during his life? Why should he exercise a posthumous tyranny over her now? Egerton, of course, felt obliged to tell her all that Duchesne directed should be told. But, that being done, why should there be any farther effort to influence her through his desires, in opposition to her own wishes?"

The vicomte shrugged his shoulders, with a smile. "It would certainly be a singular freak of fate that would make *me* the advocate of Duchesne's wishes in any respect," he said. "But it would be strange if they did not influence his daughter, especially as I have seen more than once how strong her sentiment of filial devotion was."

"It was the strongest sentiment of her nature," said D'Antignac, "and she has been wounded in it, as we are wounded just where pain is most keenly and deeply felt. All her life the cruel struggle has been going on—God on one side, her father on the other; the desire to reverence and the need to excuse, passionate affection and intellectual condemnation. She has been torn and crushed; and when, through a most terrible grief, peace has come to her, I must remonstrate against that peace being again disturbed by the image of her father. Put before her, as you propose, the case in all its bearings, give her time to decide upon it, and then accept her decision. I have confidence in Armine. I believe that it will be a wise one."

"I have confidence in her, too," said the vicomte. "She inspires one with that feeling. Yet she is very young to decide on a matter of so much importance. At least you will promise to give her your advice?"

"If she asks it—certainly. But I cannot promise that it will be exactly what you desire."

"I desire only that she shall receive what is justly hers; and you will hardly advise her to reject it?"

"I cannot tell until I hear her reasons for wishing to do so. Armine generally has good reasons for her conduct and opinions. And you must remember that although you are bound to offer whatever is just, she is *not* bound to accept it."

"She is bound by all the rules of common sense."

"Ah! common sense," said D'Antignac. "Well, that is a very good, a very useful, a highly respectable thing; but there is sometimes a sense which is uncommon that is higher and better. I have a great respect for common sense, but I have never made it the standard by which to test all opinions, as a number of worthy people do."

"Since you have often accused me of something closely verging on quixotism, I suppose I am hardly one of the worthy people," said the vicomte, laughing.

"No," the other answered, with a smile, "you are not one of them. And therefore I shall expect you to be reasonable, if for any motive—which common sense perhaps might condemn—Armine declines to profit by this discovery."

"I see that you are firmly of the opinion that she will decline, and that you are also firmly disposed to uphold her in doing so," said the vicomte. "*Eh bien*, I must simply put the matter before her myself. When and where can I see her?"

"The 'when' is for you, or for her, to determine," answered D'Antignac. "But the 'where' is easily arranged, since she is here."

"Here?" repeated De Marigny, glancing involuntarily around.

"Not at this moment," said D'Antignac, perceiving the glance. "Just before you came she went out with Hélène and Miss Bertram. But she has been staying with us since she left the convent, to which, as you may remember, she went soon after the death of her father."

"I remember—to be prepared for reception into the church."

"She has never been out of the church. But she was prepared to receive the sacraments—made a general confession and her first Communion. Poor child! How changed she was when she returned—quiet, peaceful, almost happy; although her father's death is a blow from which she will never, I fear, entirely recover."

"And yet it must be difficult for her not to feel the relief of the freedom which results from it."

"I doubt if she feels it at all," said D'Antignac. "Her

nature is too deeply affectionate. She was passionately attached to her father, and, after her fears for his eternal fate, I think that the greatest grief connected with his death is the fact that they parted in estrangement—at least on his side.”

“His fate was terrible,” said the vicomte; “but I confess that I could not regret it. He was a man whose power of doing evil was great in proportion to his natural gifts—and they were very great. I never heard him address a multitude, but I can imagine the magnetic power which he possessed, and the fiery eloquence which M. Egerton describes as fully equal to that of Gambetta. And this man, unlike Gambetta, was not a politician and self-seeker, but he had all the force which strong, fanatical conviction gives. The day might have come when he would have played the part of another Danton.”

“Nothing would have delighted him more. But how comes on our friend Egerton, who may well speak feelingly of the eloquence which nearly led him to death?”

“It certainly nearly led him to death,” said De Marigny, “but I doubt if it nearly led him into Socialism. He has too clear a mind to be captivated by such fallacies.”

“You like him, then?”

“I like him exceedingly. There is something very attractive in his character—an openness and a *verve* which promise well. When a man is prepared to hear reason, and is susceptible of enthusiasm, one may hope much from him.”

“I hope much from his association with you. It was what he needed—contact with a man of ardent faith, who is at the same time foremost in every activity and interest of the world. Generally speaking, it may be safely said that to convert men of the world we need those who are, in a measure at least, men of the world also, who possess its polish, its grace, its keen wisdom, yet use these things for God and not for the world. And so I believe that it may be your privilege to bring this soul out of the realm of shadows—of beliefs without base, and the vain opinions of men—into the presence of the great reality of divine Truth.”

“I will gladly do all that I can to this end,” said the vicomte. “But let me remind you that to pray is better than to argue when the conversion of a soul is in question; and there can be no doubt whose prayers are of most value—yours or mine.”

"Neither can there be any doubt," said D'Antignac, "that, prisoned here on this bed of pain, I am not likely to forget my friends in the sole thing that I can still do for them."

When Armine heard of M. de Marigny's visit, and that he desired to see her, she evinced, somewhat to D'Antignac's surprise, the greatest reluctance to receiving him.

"I cannot!" she said, shrinking at the mere suggestion. "It is impossible. Do not ask me!"

D'Antignac did not answer immediately. Her agitation was so evident that he reflected for a moment before replying. Then he said, with the gentle calmness which always tranquillized her:

"But it is necessary that I should ask you, and I am sure that you will not act merely from an impulsive feeling."

"It is not merely an impulsive feeling," she said. She came and knelt down by the side of his couch. "Do you not remember," she said in a low tone, "how all the last cruel trouble that divided my father and myself began with—with his seeing me speak to M. de Marigny? And have you forgotten that I told you how he bade me never speak to him again? Here is something in which I *can* obey him; and surely I should do so!"

"My dear little Armine," said D'Antignac, laying his hand tenderly on hers, "I understand all that you mean and all that you feel; but there is more to consider than you perhaps imagine. In the first place, it is entirely beyond reason that you should be bound throughout your life by the arbitrary and hasty command of a moment—"

"But M. de Marigny is entirely out of my life," she interrupted quickly. "There is no reason why I should ever see or speak to him."

"There is a very important reason why you must of necessity see and speak to him," said D'Antignac. "You cannot have forgotten the communication which your father when dying made to Egerton, and which he conveyed to you."

She made a quick gesture as of one putting a thing away from her—a gesture half-proud, half-pathetic.

"I will have nothing to do with it—nothing," she said. "What my father did not claim for himself I shall not claim in his name. If *that* is why the Vicomte de Marigny wishes to see me, simply tell him this. I have nothing more to say,

only that I am sorry Mr. Egerton disregarded my wishes and betrayed the secret confided to him."

"He disregarded your wishes with reluctance," said D'Antignac; "but he felt himself bound in honor to execute as far as possible the trust your father had confided to him, so he came to me for advice. I agreed with him that M. de Marigny, as head of the family, should certainly be informed of what your father believed to be certain facts. Yet, after all, it was not Egerton who informed him, but myself."

Armine had risen now from her kneeling position, and stood looking a little cold and reserved.

"I do not think," she said, "that Mr. Egerton should have come even to you when I requested him to hold inviolate a secret which he had received as a dying confidence."

"Not as a dying confidence, if I understand rightly," said D'Antignac, "but rather as a commission."

"Which he performed when he came to *me*," she said in the same slightly proud voice, "and therefore with which he had no more to do."

"I do not agree with you," said D'Antignac, exceedingly surprised by this manifestation of character, and understanding more fully the dilemma in which Egerton had found himself. "He felt that by the trust which your father had placed in him he was obliged to consider your interest, even if you refused to consider it yourself; and, if you have any confidence in my judgment, you may believe that he was right."

"I have every confidence in your judgment," said Armine, with more of her usual manner. "You know that. But I cannot believe that he was right to disregard my wishes and bring upon me, and upon others, annoyance which I wished to avoid. For nothing, M. d'Antignac, *nothing* shall make me take any step in the matter! What is it to me whether my father had or had not the right to bear a noble name? What is it to me whether a little more or less of wealth might be mine? I have enough for my wants, and this much at least of my father's spirit is in me: I belong to the people, my heart is with the poor and the suffering, and why should I strive to force myself into a noble house that would only scorn the descendant of a peasant and the daughter of a Socialist?"

She looked very little like the descendant of a peasant as she uttered these words, D'Antignac thought. The delicate face was instinct with feeling, the beautiful dark eyes were glowing; he had never been more struck with what he had

always remarked in her, the unmistakable signs of inherited refinement.

"I can understand," he said quietly, "that there would be very little to urge you to claim what your father regarded as his right, if any struggle was necessary to do so. But if there was none needed—if, instead of scorning, the head of the house came voluntarily to acknowledge and receive you—what then?"

She paused a moment before answering, and he saw an indescribable change come over her face—a change such as he had often observed when she was touched by a high or beautiful thought. And when she spoke her voice was like a chord of music—so many different tones of feeling blended into it.

"What then?" she repeated. "Only this: that it would be a noble thing for the head of such a house to do, granting that he believed the claim to be just, but that I have no desire for the recognition or acknowledgment."

"Yet it was your father's dying wish," said D'Antignac.

She looked at him with a glance which, even before she spoke, seemed to disarm his power of objection; it was at once so pathetic and so full of the meaning which greater knowledge of a subject gives.

"My father's dying wish has a different significance to you and to me," she said sadly. "*You* regard it, no doubt, as dictated by solicitude for me, for my personal prosperity and happiness. But *I* know my father better than to fancy that. He had not one set of opinions for his public life and another for his private life; he did not preach to others that property and rank are crimes against the brotherhood of humanity, yet grasp at them himself. He was wrong—he was mad, if you will—but I, who spent my life with him, would stake my existence on his sincerity." She paused, for her voice was choked with emotion; but controlling herself after a minute, she went on: "Do you think, therefore, that he wished me to claim rank and wealth in order that I might enjoy privileges that he held to be robbery? Ah! no. What he desired—I know it as certainly as if he had told me—was that I should use them for the ends that *he* desired, and to which he had given all his own fortune and the labor of his life. I understand now with perfect clearness why it was only after that unhappy visit to Marigny that he began to concern himself about what I believed, and to endeavor to mould and bend my faith. I re-

member well how he said that he had thought lightly of my opinions as 'merely a girl's fancy' until he found that there might be power in my hand for evil or for good; I did not understand him then, but I understand now. The power for good or evil was the inheritance of Marigny, which he thought might be mine. Do you think, then, that he would have wished me to possess that power to use for ends which he thought evil?—and you know I could not use it for ends which he thought good."

"But you might use it for ends which would be truly good?" said D'Antignac, anxious to put every view of the case before her, yet certain that she would not be moved.

She shook her head. "Even if I could," she said—"and that is doubtful, for what am I but a weak girl without judgment?—you certainly do not think that they would be ends as good as those for which M. de Marigny uses it now? Should I take out of his hand—if I had the power to do so—means that give him greater influence in the battle where he is a champion and defender of all that is most noble and of most vital importance to France? Ah! you do not know," she went on, clasping her hands with a familiar gesture, while her eyes shone on him full of radiance, "how long I have said to myself, 'If there was only something that I could do!—something to aid in this battle, which I, who have seen the other side, know must be so long and hard!—something to help those who are to save France, if she can be saved!' And now—you would have me lessen the power for good of one who can do all that I have dreamed of? Oh! no, M. d'Antignac, I am sure you do not wish it; and I am also sure of this, that I would work for my daily bread sooner than touch one centime that came from the revenues of Marigny!"

It was impossible to doubt her earnestness or her resolution, and D'Antignac smiled a little—an inward and invisible smile, if the phrase may be allowed to describe the slight sense of amusement which does not always find outward expression—as he thought how positively he had prophesied this result, even while ignorant of the reasons which would influence her.

"I comprehend your position," he said after a moment. "You feel that you could not fulfil your father's wish by using anything which came to you through this claim in the way he desired; so, rather than use it in a way he did *not* desire, you prefer to leave it in hands where it is certain to be well employed. But you overlook two things—first, that what-

ever descended to you in such a manner would be absolutely yours, to do what you will with; and you would be no more bound by the wishes of your father in the disposition of it than he would have been bound by the wishes of his grandfather—who, we may infer, would certainly not have desired that the family inheritance should be spent in founding a Commune. In the second place, M. de Marigny has a right to decline to retain what he does not feel to be justly his, and you have no right to refuse to hear reasons for believing it to be yours."

She looked at him with the same reluctant expression with which she had first heard the proposal that she should see M. de Marigny.

"You do not know how painful it would be," she said. "Surely it is not necessary! Surely you can tell him what I have said, and assure him that no argument can change my resolution!"

"I might do that," said D'Antignac, "and still he would be, by the nature of his position, constrained to insist on seeing you; and you have no reason that justifies you in refusing to see him."

"I have the memory of my father's command and of my promise that I would never speak to M. de Marigny again."

"My dear Armine, your own good sense must tell you that you are not fettered by such a command or such a promise. Your father himself set both aside when he directed you to prosecute the claim for the inheritance of Marigny, since it would be impossible to refuse to hold communication with a man who has never injured you and who is the head of the family."

"But I have told you that I have nothing, and can have nothing, to do with the family in one way or another," she said. "Therefore why should I be forced to do this thing? But I do not wish to be childish or unreasonable," she added after a moment, in which only the expression of D'Antignac's face answered her last appeal, "and if you think it absolutely necessary that I should see M. de Marigny, I *will* see him, though it will be painful—oh! more painful than I can say."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE next person who came to D'Antignac full of the *affaire* Duchesne was Egerton. He made his appearance greatly improved in looks and spirits, and after relating substantially the same facts that M. de Marigny had already related, asked if D'Antignac did not think that it was his duty to lay these facts before Armine.

"You will understand," he said, "that I am not at all anxious to do so—for I have not forgotten how Mlle. Duchesne received my former communication—but when I remember her father's dying charge to me I do not feel as if I could relieve myself from responsibility in the matter."

"It is a natural feeling," said D'Antignac; "but are you not aware that M. de Marigny intends to lay before Armine the full details of all that you have learned in Brittany, and to give her an exact statement of the case as it stands?"

"Yes," answered Egerton, "I know that is his intention. But M. de Marigny is one person, and I am another—I mean that we stand in different positions toward Mlle. Duchesne. I have received a trust from her father—"

"Which I thought you had fulfilled?" said D'Antignac.

Something in his tone made Egerton for the first time feel as if he was not comprehended with that intuitive sympathy—understood at the half-word, as the French say—to which he was accustomed from D'Antignac, but that he had to explain and make good his position, which it is always a little difficult to do. After a moment's hesitation he answered:

"I fulfilled it in part, but there were some things which Mlle. Duchesne gave me no opportunity to say. And, whether I like it or not, I feel bound to deliver the message in its entirety."

D'Antignac looked at the speaker with a quick, keen glance. "Is there," he said, "any reason of importance why you should deliver this message?"

"Would it not be a sufficient reason of importance that it was given to me?" Egerton answered. "But—yes, there is more than that. Duchesne charged me to convey to his

daughter his wishes with regard to the use she should make of this inheritance."

"Ah!" said D'Antignac. It was a sound indicating thorough comprehension. So, he said to himself, Armine was right—her father *had* desired and endeavored to fetter her in the disposition of property which must either pass into her hands or remain in those of the Vicomte de Marigny. It was unquestionably an attempt to exercise that posthumous tyranny which Hélène had from the first predicted, yet the pathos of it touched the man whose soul was so accessible to pity, as he knew that it would touch Armine. Dying, struck down in the power and prime of life, Duchesne had, as it were, stretched out his hand in a last appeal to the daughter so widely separated from him in belief, to use for his ends the inheritance that might be hers. And to that appeal it was simply impossible for the daughter to respond. The sadness and the pity of it—the pity that even in death the conflicts and discords of life could not find an end—made D'Antignac at last say to Egerton:

"I comprehend your feeling that you should deliver a message which you alone can deliver. But let me ask if you think any good end is to be gained by delivering it? On the contrary, are you not sure that it will be merely the cause of useless pain to Armine, who has already suffered so much?"

Egerton looked at him with the expression of one who is forced into an unpleasant position, yet is prepared to face its unpleasantness.

"Even if it were so," he said, "have I a right to withhold the message?"

Then there was another pause. Thus confronted with the issue, D'Antignac could not but feel that it was one thing to remonstrate, and another thing to deliberately advise the suppression of what was virtually a man's last will and testament. Every honorable instinct of human nature shrinks from the last, however unavailing, however fruitful even for harm, such a will may be. For is it not the last, the only means by which the helpless dead have power to communicate their wishes to those who yet move among the accustomed things of earth?

"No," he said at length slowly, "you have no right to withhold any message with which you are charged; but I am sorry, for poor Armine's sake, that you could not have

delivered it in its entirety when you saw her before. She has suffered so much—she has been so torn in a struggle of which you know little—that I should be glad if it were possible for her to be spared now.”

“And is it I whom you think likely to renew the struggle?” said Egerton, flushing a little. “I assure you that no one could less desire to do so. And I assure you, also, that it is no fault of mine that I did not deliver the whole of my message to Mlle. Duchesne. She simply refused to hear it; and, considering the state she was in at that time, I could not insist.”

“Nevertheless,” said D’Antignac, “she has a very clear idea of what you wished to tell her. Only yesterday, in speaking of this possible inheritance, she said that she was certain her father did not intend her to use it for her own ends, but for others—others for which she could not use it.”

“She is right,” said Egerton. “I shall never forget Duchesne’s tone when he spoke of the ‘fatal influences’ under which she had fallen, and said that he had meant to take her far away from them, to show her the ‘great work’ to which he was pledged, and, when her eyes were opened, to tell her of this inheritance and say, ‘Here is something which you must use, not for yourself, but for Humanity.’ And then he added—it rings in my ears yet!—‘I shall never say it now, but *you* will say it for me.’ Could I fail to say it, after that?” asked the young man quickly.

D’Antignac shook his head. “No,” he answered. “You could not fail to say it, after that. And fortunately she is not unprepared. She knew him so well that she divined his wishes. And it is that which makes her most resolute to refuse the inheritance which he desired her to claim.”

“And she does still refuse?”

“Positively, and I think unalterably.”

Egerton was silent, but something in the expression of his face filled D’Antignac with a sudden sense of uneasiness and made him ask:

“Is there anything else involved in your message—anything likely to affect her resolution or to disturb her?”

“Nothing likely to affect her resolution,” replied Egerton; “but yes, I fear it may disturb her. Indeed”—he paused, hesitated, then went on desperately—“I am sure that it will disturb her, in one way if not in another. And it is something which I can hardly bring myself to repeat—something

which it seems gross presumption in me to utter, even though I merely speak her father's words."

"For Heaven's sake," said D'Antignac, lifting himself as he spoke, "what other injunction has he left to be a fetter upon her?"

"I cannot see that there is any reason why I should not tell you," said Egerton. "It has been—it *is*—a dreadful weight on my mind, and I am wholly at a loss how to proceed. To suppress the message—well, we have agreed *that* is impossible. Yet to deliver it—I fear I have not courage for that either!"

"But what is it?" asked D'Antignac, full of anxiety which the other's tone was not calculated to allay.

"It is simply this," answered Egerton: "Duchesne seemed to fear that M. de Marigny might desire to marry his daughter, and he left a positive command and injunction that she should under no circumstances make such a marriage."

D'Antignac lay back on his pillows and for a moment said nothing. Then he turned his glance on Egerton and asked quietly:

"Did M. Duchesne tell you what reason he had for anticipating such a thing—I should say for conceiving it to be within the limit of possibility?"

"No," Egerton replied. "But it was very plain that he thought M. de Marigny would gladly snatch at such a means of retaining his inheritance."

D'Antignac smiled with a faint disdain. "He knew little of a Breton noble," he said. "It was natural that he *should* know little; that he, whose political creed rests broadly and simply on envy—however much high-sounding phrases may disguise the fact—should have been unable to imagine the feeling that holds worldly possessions as infinitely unimportant beside the honor of a *gentilhomme*."

"In other words," said Egerton, "he was blinded by class hatred and individual bitterness; for unless he had been so blinded I really believe that no man was more capable of comprehending nobleness. It is strange," he added, "but I do not think it is imagination which makes me recognize some traits in common between himself and the Vicomte de Marigny. The foundation of the character—the power of strong devotion to impersonal ends—strikes me as much the same in both."

"It is not strange," said D'Antignac. "The characteristics

of an old race become very strongly marked. And Brittany breeds no triflers. The Bretons are a grave, a noble, and an earnest people. Those qualities Duchesne, no doubt, carried even into the wild errors that led away his judgment. But in the Vicomte de Marigny you see the type in its best and highest development."

"M. de Marigny has been a revelation to me," said Egerton. "Before I knew him I fancied that those who possess a vivid faith in this age of the world could be divided into three classes—first, the ignorant, who know nothing and feel nothing of what the Germans call the *Zeitgeist*; second, recluses in cloisters, or—"

"Or in prisons like this," said D'Antignac, indicating his couch by a slight gesture and with a slight smile as the other hesitated. "I understand. Go on."

"No," said Egerton, coloring, "you do not understand, if you fancy that I believe this to be in any sense a prison for your mind. I only meant that those who do not come into contact with the strong breath of the world can hardly realize its power."

"Nay, do not apologize," said D'Antignac. "In a measure you are right. And your third class?"

"My third class is composed of those who maintain their faith in the face of the *Zeitgeist*, but whose mental attitude is one of protest, of warfare, and often of apology. The high, tranquil spirit of undoubting faith which we speak of as the mediæval spirit I fancied gone as utterly as the genius of mediæval times is gone."

"And M. de Marigny has taught you better than this?"

"Yes; for in M. de Marigny I see a man with the serene faith of a Crusader united to a thorough intellectual apprehension of every phase of modern thought. In worldly knowledge and accomplishment he is a man of the world—the world of this nineteenth-century France—yet his faith is as high and as ardent as if he belonged to the France of St. Louis."

"You do him only justice," said D'Antignac. "And the church of which you know so little—for you must pardon me if I say that your generalizations are based on very narrow knowledge—has many sons like him. But your words confirm what I have always believed, that we have special need at this time of men of the world, who to wide culture and knowledge shall unite strong faith and the ability to defend

that faith. The spirit of the age, of which you speak, despises devout ignorance and has no respect for halting apology; but when confronted with courage and knowledge it shrinks and turns aside. For the basis of logic on which the Catholic Church stands is simply and absolutely unanswerable; and if the *Zeitgeist* is to be slain, it must be with the sword of logic as well as the lance of prayer."

"M. de Marigny is armed with the sword," said Egerton. "Again in that he reminded me of Duchesne. The same lucid and forcible manner of unfolding a proposition or series of propositions, which I found in the one, I have observed also in the other. Grant M. de Marigny's premise, and you have no escape—short of stultifying reason—from his ultimate conclusion."

D'Antignac smiled. "You have, then, come into contact with two typical examples—one of the logic which would destroy, the other of the logic which will save, France," he said. "For as Voltaire was the last apostle of the movement which Luther began, so no nation has given to Christendom such soldiers of faith, such apostles, and such thinkers as the France of these latter times."

"I am aware of it," said Egerton. But as he spoke his mind returned to the pressing personal question which absorbed him. He was silent for a minute, and then he looked at D'Antignac with all the doubt and trouble in his eyes again.

"What am I to say to her?" he asked.

"To Armine?" said D'Antignac. "I think, if you will allow me to advise, that at present you will say nothing of the last command of her father. It would pain her beyond measure; it would revive bitter memories of unjust suspicion, and render more difficult such intercourse as she must hold with the Vicomte de Marigny. If there were any probability of that which Duchesne feared, the matter would be different; but there is not the least probability of it."

"Is there not?" said Egerton. He rose from his chair and walked to the window, where he stood for a moment looking out absently on the flashing river, the noble quays and bridges, the gay, beautiful city. D'Antignac, who could observe his face in profile, saw plainly that he was thinking of nothing that lay before him, and a suspicion that had entered his mind before returned to it. Had the fascination which drew the young man to Duchesne, after all, lain in Armine rather than in her father? He had always somewhat suspected this to be the

case, and now he felt almost certain, when Egerton turned and came back to the side of the couch.

"You will be surprised," he said abruptly, "but I do not agree with you: I think that there *is* such a probability. And, in that case, the longer I waited to tell this thing, the worse."

"But what reason have you for such a belief?" asked D'Antignac, startled by his tone and manner.

"It is not a belief: it is only an opinion," he answered. "As for my reason, I suppose I can hardly be said to have a reason. I simply derive my opinion from some things—trifles, indeed, yet significant—which I have observed in M. de Marigny. You know we were together in Brittany for some time, and now and then when he spoke of Mlle. Duchesne there was a tone, an expression—one cannot define these things, but one feels them—which made me believe that he cares for her. I will not say that he is in love—that phrase conveys more than I mean, and more than it is likely he feels. But he has been interested and touched by what he has seen of her—who could fail to be interested and touched?—and now that he knows her to be the daughter, not of a nameless Socialist, but of his own forefathers, and the heiress, perhaps, of Marigny, what should be more natural than that which Duchesne feared?"

The young man paused, a little breathless—for he had spoken quickly—but again D'Antignac did not reply at once. He put up his hand to his eyes and so lay for a moment silent. It was true—he knew it to be true. Interested and touched most certainly M. de Marigny had been by the nature which like a breath of perfume moved sensitive souls even in its passing. He remembered that the vicomte had frankly spoken of this attraction, and that he himself had even uttered a word of warning. "There can hardly be two people in the world farther apart than you and the daughter of Duchesne the Socialist," he had said; and now, by a strange turn of events, no one was nearer the head of the house of Marigny than the girl who might claim the best part of its inheritance! He lay lost in wonder, thinking that surely it had been no chance which had brought these two together and allowed them to know each other before the truth was revealed. And it was possible that that of which Egerton spoke might have come to pass—that they might have united their lives and their interests—but for this prohibition from the grave, this dead hand stretched out to forbid. That rendered it impossible. He knew Armine so well, he felt sure that only where a higher

law intervened would she disobey the father she had so passionately loved. He lifted his hand from his eyes and looked at Egerton.

"What are we to do?" he said simply.

It was Egerton's question echoed back, but to the young man there was almost comfort in the fact that some one shared his perplexity. It was unusual for D'Antignac not to go to the root of a difficulty and solve it by a few direct words; but, recognizing that his personal interest was too great to allow of his doing so in this instance, Egerton sat down to discuss the matter in all its bearings.

"I am glad that you put your question in the plural form," he said. "It is a relief not to ask, 'What am I to do?' Yet, after all, it must come to that in my case, for I, unfortunately, was the companion of poor Duchesne and received the charge which my conscience, or whatever inherited instinct does the duty for conscience, will not allow me to disregard."

Even in the midst of his anxiety D'Antignac smiled.

"Does it occur to you," he said, "that this is a penalty for playing with edged tools? If you had not gone with Duchesne you would not now be charged with this most unpleasant duty."

"But in that case Mlle. Armine—I cannot call her Mlle. Duchesne any longer; the name always seemed absurdly unsuited to her, with its *bourgeois* sound and revolutionary association!—would never have known that she was the heiress of Marigny."

"Which she will neither claim nor accept."

"True; so, as far as that is concerned, the knowledge might have gone down with her father to his grave. But if the thing of which we have spoken should ever come to pass, it can only come to pass in the light of that knowledge."

D'Antignac bowed his head; this was true. "But it will never come to pass," he said, "if Armine hears of her father's prohibition."

"Do you think that she would be bound by duty to obey that prohibition?"

"Not at all; for what is it save tyranny? And tyranny based on no reason except unprovoked hatred. But I think that she *will* obey it, though she is not bound."

The two men looked at each other. If it were only possible not to tell her! That was the thought in the mind of both. And yet both knew that it was impossible.

"I am the more sorry for this," said Egerton, rising again, and beginning to move to and fro, "because since I have known M. de Marigny it seems to me that a marriage between himself and Mlle. Armine would be an ideal union as well as a most desirable arrangement, under the circumstances. I would do much to bring it about. Yet see! by the irony of fate I am appointed the instrument to prevent it."

D'Antignac looked at him keenly for a moment. Then he said: "Either you are very generous or *I* am very mistaken. I have been fancying you in love with Armine yourself."

"I!" said Egerton. He paused in his movement and stood facing the other, while a quick flush dyed his countenance. Then he smiled; and there was always something irresistible in the flashing brightness of his smile.

"I have been somewhat inclined to fancy the same thing," he said; "but I fear it was only a fancy, and, honestly"—the smile died away—"I do not think I am capable of anything else. Mlle. Armine has touched some chords of my nature more exquisitely than any one ever touched them before, and I owe—I shall always owe—her much. But the interest which she has excited in me bears no likeness to what is conventionally known as love. For one thing, she stands on a spiritual plane as far above me as—as the heavens are above the earth. I have always felt that the atmosphere of her soul is like that which surrounds some stainless Alpine peak, while mine—ah!" cried the young man, with genuine humility, "it needs no words to tell that mine is like the plain where all lowering vapors of the world abide."

D'Antignac regarded him kindly. "Unhappy is the man who loves a woman whom he does not feel to be in any degree above him," he said.

"Yes," answered Egerton, "but for such love *some* sense of equality must exist; the distance must not be too wide, the height too great for hope to scale. But the hope would be wild presumption which in my case should think to climb the height where this nature stands—a nature so ideal that I would not have believed any man could be worthy of it had I not met the Vicomte de Marigny."

D'Antignac smiled as a girl might at praise of her lover. "You pay him a high tribute," he said, "but he deserves it. I, who know him well, know that. As far as we can judge, a marriage between Armine and himself would indeed be an ideal union. And yet—"

"And yet it may be prevented by this prohibition!" said Egerton. "It seems intolerable! To be able to suppress it I would sacrifice anything but my solemn word to the dead. I cannot sacrifice that."

"No one could wish you to do so," said D'Antignac. "But in my opinion there is no need for you to discharge the unpleasant duty at once. What you have to tell would not only wound Armine deeply—as another proof of the narrow hatred of her father—but it would make her even more averse than she is at present to holding any intercourse with M. de Marigny. Yet, in the position in which they both stand, it is absolutely necessary that such intercourse should take place. Wait, then, at least until he has, officially as it were—in his capacity as head of the house—laid before her the nature and extent of her claim on Marigny."

"Personally it can only be a relief to me to wait," said Egerton. "But the doubt in my mind is this: may not delay make the matter worse?"

"Not the delay which I counsel," answered D'Antignac. "I can only advise; but if you trust my judgment—"

"I do," the young man interposed quickly. "I not only trust it thoroughly, but it is a greater relief than I can express to have other shoulders on which to throw the weight of responsibility that has proved too heavy for my own."

CHAPTER XXXV.

HAVING yielded and given her promise that she would see M. de Marigny, Armine made no farther demur on the subject, and when, a day or two later, Hélène came to her, saying that he was in the *salon* awaiting her, she rose at once, though her reluctance was evident in the paling of her face and the slight trembling of the hands which closed the book she had been reading. Touched by these significant signs, Mlle. d'Antignac put her arms round the slender figure and pressed with her lips the soft cheek. "God direct thee, *petite!*" she said gently. Armine looked at her with something very wistful in her clear glance, but she did not answer save by returning the caress. Then she turned and passed into the *salon*.

The recollection of how and where she had seen M. de Marigny last was so strongly present in her mind that, as he came forward to meet her, she almost felt as if she were back

in the churchyard of Marigny, with its quiet graves on which the sunlight fell, and its stone Calvary dominating the scene. She stopped short: was there not indeed a grave between them? Had not death alone made this meeting possible?

The thought was like a dagger to her heart, and in its sharpness she involuntarily clasped her hands together and so stood, gazing at him with the pathetic eyes he so well remembered. It would have been an awkward moment had he not been a man endowed with great quickness of intuitive sympathy. But to him also the memory of the meeting under the old church porch of Marigny came; and not only the memory of the meeting, but of all that followed it. Those slight fingers clasped so nervously together had sent the warning which might have saved his life, and the golden eyes, which he had thought so beautiful and expressive when he saw them last, had now the sadness that comes of many tears and settled grief. He would fain have put out his hand and taken hers in token of sympathy with the grief; but he, too, remembered the shadow between them, so he said:

"I hope, mademoiselle, that I have not made too great a demand upon you in asking this interview."

The exquisite courtesy and consideration of his tone touched her and made her realize the apparent ungraciousness of her own attitude. She unclasped her hands and came forward.

"No, M. le Vicomte," she answered quietly, "you have not made too great a demand upon *me*, but upon yourself I fear that you have. I know that you have come from a sense of duty, on an errand which must be unpleasant to you, and which, so far as I am concerned, is altogether unnecessary. I bade M. d'Antignac to tell you this."

"I hope to make you understand why I could not accept your answer from M. d'Antignac," he said.

Then he moved a chair slightly forward for her, and, as she sat down, seated himself in front of her. Their eyes met, and again Armine felt the sense of confidence of which, even in their brief intercourse, she had been conscious before. That glance, so penetrating yet so gentle and kind, inspired her with a trust which, save in the case of D'Antignac, was new to her experience. For hers had not been one of those lives which know the certainty of sympathy and reliance upon strength. In her own strength she had long been forced to stand alone, and if she felt now that under other circumstances she might safely have yielded to the guidance of such a nature as that

which was revealed in the face before her, she also knew with instinctive certainty that the luxury of such guidance was not for her—that as she had been forced to rely upon herself during her father's lifetime, so she must rely upon herself and her own judgment still.

As she did not answer his last words, save by a glance that seemed to say, "Speak, then!" M. de Marigny after a moment went on:

"You are right in saying that it is a duty which has brought me here, but you are wrong in believing it an unpleasant one. On the contrary, few things could give me more pleasure than to be permitted to repair an injustice." He paused a moment, then went on: "I know that you have heard the story of the marriage of your great-grandparents, so I need not repeat it. When such a story was told to me it became at once my duty to verify it. I come now to tell you that I have done so and that it is true. The marriage took place exactly as you have heard, and the house of Marigny has gained another daughter."

There was a charming grace as well as cordiality in the tone of the last sentence which it would have been impossible for Armine not to have felt. Her eyes thanked him even before she said:

"You are very kind; but if my wishes had been regarded you would never have heard the story of which you speak."

"You must pardon those who disregarded your wishes," he answered. "It was right that I should hear it—I, who am now your kinsman, with a kinsman's right to protect your interest."

She looked at him for a moment in apparent surprise.

"And yet," she said, "my interest—if I have one—is opposed to yours. In other words, my gain must be your loss."

"What does that matter?" he asked. "The question is simply one of justice, not of individual gain or loss. And loss is a relative term. I can lose nothing that I should regret."

"You will lose nothing—nothing at all—through me," she said. "I have only consented to speak of the subject in order that I might tell you this. Whether the marriage in question ever took place or not is a matter of indifference to me and cannot influence my life."

"It is not in our power, except in a very limited sense, to say what shall or shall not influence our lives," said M. de Marigny. "The event which you declare cannot influence

yours is influencing it at this moment, else why are we talking here?"

"That is true," she answered. "But we are talking in order that I may tell you that the influence shall go no farther. And I should be glad if you would believe this without more words."

He shook his head, smiling a little at her tone. "I am sorry to force on you anything which is disagreeable," he said, "but I cannot accept such a decision without more words. I will promise, however, that they shall be as brief as possible. You have heard from M. d'Antignac, no doubt, that I went down into Brittany and examined all the records, as well as heard the testimony of the sole witness in the matter. Then—for you will understand that I am not acting in my individual capacity, but as the guardian of interests which are only mine for a time—I laid the case before an eminent lawyer, and have here his written opinion, at which I must beg you to look."

He produced as he spoke a folded paper, which he offered her. She hesitated—evidently averse to taking it—and said with an appealing glance:

"It can serve no purpose—I assure you that it can serve no purpose. Is there any *necessity* that I should look at it?"

"Yes," he answered gravely, "there is necessity. I could not accept any decision which you made in ignorance of the exact nature and extent of your claim."

"Then," she said quickly, "you will accept my decision when I am no longer in ignorance?"

"I shall have no alternative but to do so," he replied, "though you must allow me to reserve the right to remonstrate."

She did not answer, but, extending her hand, took the paper and opened it. It was of considerable length, and after a moment she rose and moved away to the window to read it.

M. de Marigny—sitting still, with that perfect quietude which is one of the most striking signs of high breeding—watched the slender figure as it stood against the light, the graceful, well-set head and the delicate outlines of the profile, with its soft southern tints and the dark, outward-curling lashes of the down-cast eyes. There was no physical sign of race lacking; and when, as in a vision, he saw that presence on the terrace or moving through the rooms of the old château, he said to himself that no one could think it had found an unfitting mistress.

Presently Armine turned and came back toward him. He rose as she approached, and when she held out the paper he saw to his surprise that she was smiling.

"This is better than I had hoped," she said simply. "It seems that there is no certainty that I would be able to claim anything, if I wished to do so. I am glad of that. I need not feel now that I am disregarding my father's wishes."

Her relief was evidently so genuine that he was also forced to smile.

"I am sorry to lessen your pleasure," he said, "but I think you misunderstand the opinion a little. Remember, in the first place, that it is given to me—the person in possession—and naturally presents the case in as favorable a light as possible for my interest. This lawyer says in substance: 'It is not *certain* that a marriage which occurred so long ago could be satisfactorily established, according to the rigid requirements of French law with regard to marriages; but the case is strong against you, and you need not be surprised at an unfavorable result.' Now, that is putting the matter very strongly, for you."

He paused; but as Armine, whose face had fallen somewhat, looked at him with mute interrogation, after a moment he went on:

"After giving the opinion the lawyer was kind enough to advise an amicable arrangement with the claimant, if it were possible, rather than the expense and tedious delay of a lawsuit. And that amicable arrangement is what I have come to make, if you will permit me, mademoiselle."

"But I have told you that I am no claimant," she said, with the first shade of haughtiness which he had ever perceived in her manner.

"Nevertheless," he answered, "though you will not claim them, you have rights which neither you nor I can ignore."

"It may be proper that *you* should not ignore them," she said. "But there is nothing which forbids my doing so—nothing."

"Are you sure of that?" he asked quietly. "It seems to me that there may be something. There may be a sense of duty."

"To whom? to what?" she asked. "No, M. de Marigny; I have been over all this ground, and I have asked counsel of those who are wise enough to give it. There is no duty which requires me to assume a rank to which I was not born." She

paused a moment, as if collecting her thoughts, then went on: "And it seems to me that you forget one thing: if it is doubtful whether I have any legal claim, whatever I should accept from you—were I capable of accepting anything—would be simply a gift of your generosity."

"No," he said quickly. "It would be an act of justice, not of generosity. I should have no right to be generous with the inheritance of those who are to come after me. It might be possible that the law would not recognize this marriage; but you must be aware that one may have a moral certainty of a fact which one may not be able to prove, and that there are moral rights which are not legal rights."

"That may be," she said, "and it is a noble view of the case; but I, who would not accept a legal right—no, not if it were absolutely indisputable—will certainly never accept one based on a moral claim. Of that you may be sure."

She lifted her head as she spoke, and a light shone for a moment in the deep, gentle eyes which gave emphasis to her words and made M. de Marigny say to himself that further insistence seemed, indeed, useless. He felt instinctively the strength of her resolution, and he also felt that it was not based upon mere obstinacy, but upon reasons that were neither fanciful nor vague. D'Antignac had warned him of this result, and he was therefore not surprised, but even more reluctant than he had anticipated to abide by the decision so steadily announced—to let all things be as if that marriage had never taken place between the Breton noble and the peasant girl who saved him.

"Mademoiselle," he said at length, "I must beg you to consider, to take time to reflect. You are very young to decide so positively upon so important a matter."

"I have had time, and I have not decided without reflection," she answered. "As for my youth—well, it is true I am young, but even in youth one may know what one desires of life. I desire neither rank nor wealth, for what should I do with either?"

Then, as a last argument, he said: "I am told that it was your father's wish that you should claim all that was yours."

He was sorry for the words almost as he uttered them when he saw the pained look that came into her eyes. But she answered very quietly:

"It was my misfortune to differ with my father on many points, but I understood him thoroughly, and I am sure he

did not wish me to claim or to take anything for myself, but only as a trust for his ends. You know what these were; you can judge whether or not you would like any part of the revenues of Marigny devoted to such ends. Yet only in that way could I fulfil his desire."

What could M. de Marigny answer to this? He thought of representing, as D'Antignac had done, that her father's wishes had no binding force upon her; but since he had just urged one desire as an argument, it was difficult to declare another of no force. And, moreover, he felt that no words could change her resolution. The expression of the pale, steadfast face assured him of that. After a pause of considerable reflection he said:

"I perceive that it is useless to urge you farther. I wish that it were otherwise; I wish that I could induce you to accept whatever is justly yours. But at least I trust that you will not refuse to take your position as an acknowledged daughter of the house of Marigny?"

She regarded him with a faint, sweet smile.

"You are worthy to be *Sieur* of Marigny, M. le Vicomte," she said. "It is noble that you, the head and representative of such a house, should come and desire to acknowledge as belonging to it the daughter of one who was a foe not only of your order but of yourself, and whose only claim to admittance into your house is through a *mésalliance* which you must regard as a blot upon your line. It proves that you think more of justice than even of the honor of a noble name; but I, the descendant of that peasant girl whom your kinsman married in secret and never acknowledged, and the daughter of the Socialist who was yesterday your enemy, can no more accept your justice than your generosity. The house of Marigny and I have nothing in common; and while I appreciate your recognition and thank you for the kindness of your desires, you must receive my positive assurance that what I have been from my birth I shall remain to my death. And," she added, "the Christian and the Socialist are alike agreed that it matters little what name we bear during the brief space of our pilgrimage here."

"Unless we absolutely renounce the world, it matters more than you think, perhaps," answered the vicomte. "But you make it impossible for me to say more. I am sorry that I have failed so utterly, and I wish that I had been able to command more arguments with which to convince you—"

"No arguments would have had any effect," she interposed

"Then," he said, "it only remains for me to hope that, though you decline to receive me as a kinsman, you will not refuse to consider me a friend, who feels he has a peculiar right to serve you."

She grew a shade paler, and, half-unconsciously as it were, drew slightly back.

"You are very kind," she said. "I understand and appreciate; but between you and me, M. de Marigny, there can be little question of intercourse or service. If it is friendship, however, to desire that all blessings may fall upon you, and that you may serve a noble cause as well in the future as in the past, then, believe me, I am your friend."

"And believe that I am grateful for your friendship," he said, touched by her tone and look. "I will trouble you no more at present with the subject we have been discussing; but I am glad that I need not lose sight of you, that you are here with the best of my friends. Whether you allow it or not, I have a right to feel interest in your welfare, and more than that—"

He paused. He was about to add, "I have a debt to pay." But his finer instinct forbade the words. Something, too, in Armine's face restrained him. It seemed to him that he read some fear of such an allusion in the clear, golden eyes. Instead of finishing the sentence he took from a table by which he stood the lawyer's opinion that he had laid on it.

"This," he said, "has, after all, proved useless. Yet—who knows?—perhaps nothing in the world proves useless. It has served to make us better known to each other, and I hope that you do not regard this as an evil. To me it is a great pleasure."

"I certainly could not regard it as an evil," she answered after an instant's hesitation; "but—forgive me if I repeat that you and I have nothing in common."

The words would have seemed very ungracious had not the wistful appeal of her glance softened them—that glance which had often before said more to him than her lips uttered. Did it not say to him now, "Do not press me; do not urge upon me an association and friendship which is forbidden by loyalty to the dead"? There was no doubt that it said this, and no doubt also that he understood the message, for he answered gently:

"Pardon me if I disagree with you. I think that we have much in common—our friendship, our faith, and a lineage of which you would be proud if you knew more of it. Cannot these things drive the past from your memory—that unhappy past in which I declare to you that there was never the faintest feeling of personal animosity on my part?"

"Do you suppose I imagine that there was?" she said quickly. "No, M. le Vicomte, I have no doubt that all animosity was on—the other side. But do you not see—do you not feel—that this makes it harder to forget?"

"And do you not see," he said, "that you are thus perpetuating the animosity which I am sure you would have ended, if you could? Let us end it now!" He held out his hand as he spoke. "Let us bury all memory of it in the grave over which you mourn, and believe that you can do the dead no better service than to forget all that was unworthy of honor in his life. Do not hesitate!"—she stood looking at him, but did not extend her hand to meet his. "The only existence which the hatred you regret has now is in its influence on your conduct. For your father's sake, then, as well as for your own, let me beg you to end that influence at once."

The thought was new to her; he saw that in the eyes that slowly filled with tears as she gave him her hand. Then, when the crystal drops began to fall, she turned and silently left the room.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"HAS it occurred to you, Sibyl," said Miss Dorrance, "that there is a great change in Mr. Egerton?"

The two young ladies were standing together at the window of Mrs. Dorrance's apartment on the Champs Elysées, gazing down at the broad avenue filled with all the world streaming toward the Bois; for it was Sunday afternoon, and the great thoroughfare was filled from side to side with its accustomed Sunday throng. Mrs. Bertram and her daughter had taken breakfast with the Dorrances, and the two elder ladies were now talking gently together, while the younger ones had strolled to the window to regard the *beau-monde*.

Sibyl did not answer for a moment; then she said indifferently: "I have seen very little of Mr. Egerton of late—

too little to form an opinion. What kind of a change do you mean?"

"Well, not a change for the better," answered Laura. "He is not half so agreeable as he used to be. I think the Socialists have spoiled him. He gives me the idea of a man who is absorbed in something. He was here a few days ago, but I thought him very *distract* and altogether mysterious about a journey he had just made."

"You cannot call a man mysterious because he does not take all the world into his confidence about his private affairs," said Miss Bertram. "What had you to do with his journey?"

"Nothing, of course; but you know that, unless there is some mystery, a man naturally speaks of where he has been and what he has done. However, that is a trifle. The change I speak of is really in himself. I am surprised that you have not observed it."

"I have not seen enough of him to observe anything," repeated Miss Bertram carelessly. "And if he has changed—well, does that matter? We all change more or less as time goes on."

"But he has changed rapidly."

"Has he? I suppose under a strong influence one *can* change rapidly."

She uttered the last words meditatively, and then, as if the subject did not interest her in comparison with the equipages and toilettes passing below, leaned a little farther forward to look down at the brilliant, crowded street. As she did so a mail phaeton suddenly drew up before their door, and a gentleman, throwing the reins to his groom, stepped down to the pavement. Miss Bertram drew back a little, and Laura said: "Ah! there is Cousin Duke. No doubt he has come to take us to the Bois."

"To take *you*, very probably," said her friend.

The other laughed. "He is not in the habit of troubling himself about me," she said. "But I told him last night that you would be here to-day. *Et voilà!*"

Miss Bertram vouchsafed no reply, but stood quite still, looking out, until the bell of the apartment sounded; and when the door of the *salon* opened she turned—to see two gentlemen enter.

One was Talford, the other Egerton; and as Laura went forward with an exclamation of surprise, they explained that

they had met under the *porte-cochère*. "I was just turning in as Talford drove up," said Egerton.

"And I consider the conjuncture very lucky," said Talford, "for now we can form a charming *partie carrée* for the Bois. I called to see if these ladies would not like a drive. The afternoon is beautiful and all the world is out in force."

"I think it would be delightful," said Laura. "What do you say, Sibyl?"

Miss Bertram shook her head. "I am sorry," she said, "but I never felt less inclined for the Bois. I must beg Mr. Talford to excuse me."

Talford, at whom she looked as she uttered the last words, said: "I should prefer to change your mind, if that were possible. If you do not care for the Bois we will go anywhere else. A drive to St. Cloud will be pleasant."

"You are very kind, but I do not care to drive at all," she answered. "Indeed, frankly, I have another plan for the afternoon, and—partially an engagement."

Talford glanced suspiciously at Egerton. "In that case," he said a little stiffly, "I cannot, of course, press the matter."

"But how disagreeable of you, Sibyl!" cried Laura. "What is your engagement?"

"One in which I fear that I cannot tempt you and Mr. Talford to join me," Sibyl replied, with a smile. "I half-promised Mlle. d'Antignac to meet her in Notre Dame this afternoon."

"In Notre Dame!" repeated Miss Dorrance in a disgusted tone. "Why, it is *miles* away; and on this beautiful afternoon to go and bury yourself in that dark old cathedral, when you might be enjoying all the sunshine and life of the Bois—what an idea!"

"No doubt it seems to you dreadful," said Sibyl calmly, "but you must allow for differences of taste. And I have seen the Bois very often, while I have never heard the great preacher who is to preach in Notre Dame this afternoon."

"I move," said Egerton, "that we all go to Notre Dame, if Miss Bertram will allow us to do so."

"I should have no right to forbid your doing so," she answered, looking at him with a friendly glance.

But Talford shrugged his shoulders. "I can imagine nothing more unamusing," he said, "than to sit for two or three hours in that great stone vault, listening to religious platitudes fit only for the childhood of the human mind."

"Have you ever heard them?" asked Egerton. "It might be well to do so before declaring what they are. For myself I can only say that I have never heard elsewhere such logic and such eloquence as I have heard from the pulpit of Notre Dame. And men who, like yourself, Talford, talk of religious truths as 'fit only for the childhood of the human mind,' simply prove their ignorance of the great philosophy on which those truths rest."

"A Saul among the prophets!" said Talford, with a slight, scornful laugh. "You have transferred your allegiance, then, from Socialism to the philosophy of the pulpit of Notre Dame? My dear Egerton, suffer me to offer you this advice: it is well to determine what you believe before you proceed to preach it."

"I grant that it is well," said Egerton, flushing a little; "only in that case a man might think more of himself—of his character for consistency—than of truth. But I do not wish to preach anything. I only affirm what I know to be a act."

"And if it be—what then?" asked the other carelessly. "Would the verifying such a fact repay me for losing an hour of sunshine and pleasure? I do not think so; and I should be glad if I could persuade Miss Bertram to be of my opinion—to resign Notre Dame for the Bois."

"It would be a poor exchange, Mr. Talford," said Sibyl gravely; and as these two regarded each other, Egerton could not resist the impression that there was more than met the ear in their words. "I have promised to go to Notre Dame, and I should disappoint myself as well as Mlle. d'Antignac if I failed in my appointment."

Mr. Talford bowed with grace. "Then it is I who must resign myself to disappointment," he said. "I am sorry that the attractions which I offer are so much less than those of Notre Dame; but there only remains for me to hope that you will enjoy the logic and eloquence of which Egerton speaks. Now, Laura, can I tempt *you*?"

"Well, do you know, Cousin Duke," answered Laura, "I do not think that, although we *are* cousins, I can very well drive alone with you in the Bois, and I am very sure that Sibyl cannot go alone with Mr. Egerton down to Notre Dame, so I suppose I must go with her. After all, no doubt one ought to go to church on Sunday—even if one is in Paris."

"It is impossible not to admire your devout frame of mind," said Mr. Talford, with a liberal infusion of sarcasm in his tone.

"My dear Laura," said Miss Bertram, "there is not the least necessity for such a sacrifice. Mr. Egerton had no part in my plans for the afternoon. I meant to drive home with mamma, then take my maid and go down to the cathedral, where I shall meet Mlle. d'Antignac. This is what I still purpose to do. I beg, therefore, that you will not let me interfere with your pleasure, since you can easily find some one to propitiate the proprieties by accompanying you."

"Oh! yes, I know half a dozen people within a stone's throw who would be delighted to join us," said Laura, looking at her cousin.

He assented, though not with a very good grace; for there was only one person whom he wished to join them, and her refusal was a revelation as well as a disappointment to him. In his vexation he discovered that Sibyl Bertram was more of a necessity to him than he had imagined, and that her power to move him was greater than he liked.

The matter ended, however, in his driving off with Laura in search of some of the friends living within a stone's throw, while Miss Bertram and Egerton, standing together at the window, watched their departure. Then the latter said somewhat diffidently:

"I understood, of course, that I *had* no part in your plans for the afternoon, but may I not have a part? May I not accompany you to Notre Dame? It seems to me that it is very absurd if you and I—who are neither French people nor moving in French society—cannot go there alone."

"I certainly see no reason why we should not," Sibyl answered frankly. "It is very different from going to the Bois, and it would save me the journey home for Marie. Let us ask mamma."

Mrs. Bertram demurred a little, but finally yielded to a common-sense view of the matter, and also, no doubt, to her liking for Egerton, and agreed that *les convenances* should be outraged in the manner proposed, "since you will not be likely to meet any one who knows you," she said to Sibyl.

That young lady laughed. "Most of our acquaintances certainly do not frequent Notre Dame," she said. "And those whom I shall meet will not be shocked. That I promise you."

So, according to the familiar proverb, it was the unexpected which came to pass; for certainly Egerton, when he idly turned in under the Dorrance *porte-cochère*, had little thought of issuing from it with Sibyl Bertram for a companion. As they stepped out on the broad pavement he said:

"The afternoon is so beautiful that, if you do not object to a little exercise, I can suggest a pleasanter way of reaching the Ile de la Cité than by a carriage. It is only a short walk from here to the river, where we can take one of the boats that ply up and down it. It is rather a *bourgeois* mode of travel, but it has its advantages and pleasures. To one born on the Mississippi the Seine does not commend itself as a very imposing stream; yet I like to journey on it."

"Strangely enough, I never have done so," said Sibyl. "By all means let us take the boat. Here is a street that will lead us straight to the river."

It brought them out on the Cours de la Reine, than which there is no more charming spot in Paris. On the fresh green foliage of the trees the spring sunshine streamed, and the river, flowing by between its beautiful quays and under its stately bridges, wore the color of the sky. Every bench along the *allées* was filled with orderly, well-dressed groups wearing that air of happiness and content with simple pleasures which is so marked a feature of French life, and makes one wonder afresh at the fierce storms of social discontent with which this nation has convulsed the world.

As Egerton and his companion walked toward the Pont d'Alma he pointed to one of the small steamboats that touch at the different quays and on Sunday are crowded with passengers. "Yonder is the craft on which I proposed we should embark," he said; "but after all I am doubtful: I remember that you have a horror of contact with your fellow-creatures who do not wear satin and brocade."

Miss Bertram smiled. "I suppose one should not encourage such fastidiousness," she said. "And there is a novelty about this that I like, since the contact is in the open air and will not be for very long."

"Oh! no, a few minutes will land us on the Ile de la Cité," said Egerton as they descended the quay to the landing-place of the boat.

After she was on its deck Sibyl felt that she was repaid for democratic contact with the *bourgeoisie* around her by the pleasure of motion, the enchanting softness and brightness of

the day—which now for the first time she seemed fully to feel—and the beautiful view of Paris which this noble river-way through its midst affords. Egerton thought that he had never seen her so simply and heartily pleased as when she presently turned her eyes on him.

"Why, it is charming!" she said. "I do not think I have ever felt the outward beauty of Paris more strongly. I always knew that the borders of the river were lovely, but never appreciated how lovely before. Has any other river in the world such splendid promenades along its banks, such wealth of foliage, such magnificent buildings? See, here is the Palais Bourbon, and yonder the great front of the Louvre! I think I must echo what I heard a French governess say once with enthusiasm: '*J'aime les bords de la Seine!*'"

Egerton smiled. "One would not think you had lived in Paris until its beauty was familiar to you," he said.

"But beautiful things do not lose their beauty by familiarity, else we might even cease to enjoy the sunshine." She paused a moment, then with a swift glance over their companions said: "Of course you have read *Un Philosophe sous les toits*; do you remember the chapter called 'La Compensation,' the description of the journey to Sèvres of two poor working-girls? Our fellow-passengers remind me of it. How much more real their enjoyment is than that of the *beau-monde* whom we left streaming out to the Bois! The philosopher of the attic is right: 'La jouissance est seulement dans ce qu'on sent, et les hommes blasés ne sentent plus; la satiété a ôté à leur âme l'appétit, tandis que la privation conserve ce premier des dons humains, *la facilité du bonheur.*'"

"Yes," said Egerton, "that is very true." Then he glanced up at the window of a tall house on the Quai Voltaire which they were passing at that moment. "Yonder is an attic philosopher," he said, "who would agree with you."

"Ah!" said Sibyl. She, too, looked up at the window, and a shade of sadness fell over her face. "To think that there he lies—prisoned and in pain, with no possible hope of release save by death—while all this tide of life sweeps by! It is a better sermon than any we are likely to hear at Notre Dame, Mr. Egerton."

Egerton did not deny this. "It is a wonderful sermon," he said. "Speaking for myself, I am sure that I never come within his influence and leave it quite the same. But perhaps one might say that in lesser degree of every one; for there

are few people who do not, for the length of time that we are in contact with them, exercise some slight influence on our thoughts and feelings. Even if they only irritate or disgust, *that* is an influence."

Sibyl laughed. "A very common one," she said. "But it is frightful to consider that we are influencing one another in some degree all the time. Have you not come in contact with people whom you did not know, and who might not utter a word, yet whose very presence could turn your thoughts higher or lower? And there are others whose society is like a stifling moral atmosphere. One feels insensibly everything lowered and dwindling—one's conceptions of life, one's belief in goodness, one's standards for action—when one is with them. I can imagine nothing more horrible, more degrading to the whole moral nature, than such companionship, if one were unable to escape from it. But," she added, speaking as if to herself, "one can escape."

"I think," said Egerton, with a smile, "that we have escaped to-day."

She did not contradict him, and now they were drawing near the sharp point of that boat-shaped island which, being the cradle of Paris, was blazoned as a ship on the city's ancient arms. Above the mass of buildings the graceful spire of the Sainte Chapelle rose, bearing its *fleurs de lys* toward heaven, while beyond—dark, massive, magnificent—the towers of Notre Dame stood against the sky.

"They built for eternity—those architects of the middle ages," said Sibyl, looking at the great symphony of stone.

Landing at the Pont Neuf, they had but a short distance to walk to the cathedral, and it was when they were entering the open space before the noble façade that Egerton said: "I fear that it will be rather hopeless to attempt to find Mlle. d'Antignac, unless you have some special place of meeting appointed."

"There was a place," Sibyl answered. "Not

" 'the third confessional
Between the pillar and the wall,'

but, if Vespers had not commenced, the Chapelle de Notre Dame."

Vespers had not commenced. The immense interior, with its twilight atmosphere and those vast, soaring arches where

birds dwelt as in the trees of the forest, held its silence still unbroken by the organ's rolling thunder and the choristers' silver tones. But there were some signs of preparation. A steady stream of people were pouring into the nave, and as Egerton and Miss Bertram passed down the aisle to the choir they looked along the vaulted passage, lighted by stained glass, which led to the sacristy, and saw the marshalling of a procession with shining robes and gleaming banners—a glorious effect of color in the dim, rich dusk.

By a fortunate chance they met Hélène and Armine as they passed around the choir, before reaching the chapel. Mlle. d'Antignac smiled, though she also seemed a little surprised at the sight of these two so calmly proceeding together, and said to Sibyl: "I had given you up; but you are just in time. Come, let us take our places."

They moved on together quickly, and so Egerton found himself with Armine. It was their first meeting since he had stood before her with her father's dying message, and the thought of that interview made it difficult for him to speak. It was she who looked up with her soft eyes, and held out her hand.

"I hope that you are well—again, Mr. Egerton," she said.

"Yes, I am very nearly well," he answered. "And you, mademoiselle?"

"There is nothing to say of me," she replied. "I am well and with my friends—that is all."

"That is much," he said. "I have been very glad to know that you were with such friends."

"There could not be better ones," she said in a tone of deep feeling.

They walked on in silence after this, until, as they were passing a certain part of the aisle, Egerton turned and glanced at his companion.

"You may not remember," he said in a low, quick voice, "but I met you here—once. It was owing to you that I was here at all, and it seemed strange to meet you then—as strange as to be here with you now. I do not wish to pain you by any remembrance of the past, but I think you may like to know—and I can never find a better place to tell you—that your influence always stood between me and that which might else have fascinated me, and that it is to you I owe whatever rays of light have come to me."

She paused and stood quite still, looking at him for an

instant, and he never forgot the expression of her face as he saw it in the light of one of the great stained windows. Was it wonder, pleasure, or pain which he read chiefly in the deep eyes? There was only infinite simplicity in the voice which said presently: "We have much for which to be grateful to God, monsieur."

And then they walked silently on.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IN this manner that first meeting with Armine, which Egerton had secretly dreaded, being over, he found himself following her into the nave, where she knelt on a chair next those already occupied by Mlle. d'Antignac and Miss Bertram.

He sat down quietly beside her; and whether it was that the effect of her last words or some other influence rendered him peculiarly susceptible, it is at least certain that the spirit of the great church seemed to lay hold of and take possession of him. He had felt it before—that spirit of immovable serenity and triumphant faith which the massive pillars and the soaring arches express and embody—but never so strongly as now. Looking at the columns that rose around him and were lost in the obscurity of the vast roof, which springs heavenward like an ardent soul, he was moved again with a yearning of envy of the souls that had thus written in stone their imperishable *Credo*. "Whatever other trials life held for them, they knew nothing of the doubt which has wrenched the very foundations of existence from under the feet of this generation," he said to himself. "If one had such faith, all things else would surely be easy; but how is one to gain it who has been filled with the spirit of an age like this?"

The thought made him glance at Sibyl Bertram. Her face looked pale and grave as she sat gazing at the distant altar, the myriad tapers of which formed a mass of radiance to the eye at the end of a long vista, while the mighty roll of the organ and the sound of the cantors' voices filled the space overhead. Did some yearning for faith come to her also? An instinct of sympathy seemed to tell Egerton so, to make him understand the expression of that face turned toward the far-off sanctuary where light and color, the gleam of jewels and the white smoke of incense, were framed by the

dim, aspiring arches of the immense encircling obscurity, like a vision of heaven vouchsafed to cheer the darkness of life.

But presently organ and voices ceased, a hush fell, and in the great carved pulpit stood the preacher. He was a striking figure—his intellectual head, with its dark, shorn crown and his strong, clear-cut face, rising above the white habit of St. Dominic and thrown into relief by the shadows around him—as he paused for a moment before beginning to speak. Eger-ton saw Sibyl look up with parted lips. Was she wondering what message he would have for her? This was its substance :

“Every age,” began the clear voice, “has its distinctive character impressed upon it by God, its divinely-appointed work to do, and its inevitable conflict with evil to wage. But at the present time there are many earnest souls who despair of the age in which our lot is cast, who think that all things are hastening toward evil, and who look with darkest forebodings upon the prospects of a society which seems daily divorcing itself more and more from the light of truth and the source of unity. Then, in strong contrast to these fearful souls are those who, full of exulting hope, believe that a new light is dawning for humanity, that greater possibilities of freedom and happiness are broadening before it, and that a religion of infinite value—a religion that will change the whole face of the world—is to be founded on the devotion of man to his fellow-man. There are few who do not include in their acquaintance types of both of these classes, and there are few also who do not sometimes ask themselves what they must think of this age, so clamorous in its demands, so loud in assertion of its own excellence, so full of promise to one set of thinkers and so full of evil to another.

“In order that we may know what to think—inclining neither to despair at its many evils nor to a delusive hope born of its specious promises—we must remember that which I began by stating, that God impresses a distinctive character on every age, and we must look for this character not only in the good but in the evil aspect of the age; for as evil is nothing of itself, but only the perversion and travesty of good, so we shall find underlying the fallacies of the age the same fundamental idea which is the inspiration of its good. For every epoch has a twofold spirit—the spirit with which God fills those who strive to accomplish his divine purposes and to hasten the reign of his kingdom on earth, and the

spirit with which his enemy and the enemy of souls animates those who oppose these purposes and retard that reign. What, then, is the idea which we find underlying both the truth and the error of the present age? What is the divine inspiration which gives force and movement to our time? It is unquestionably an idea of the necessity for a greater love of mankind, an inspiration toward a keener sense of universal brotherhood, toward a deeper charity and a wider compassion for the poor, suffering humanity that lies around us, steeped in misery and cursed with sin. This inspiration is inciting all souls that love God to great deeds and greater sacrifices; in the burning heart of the church it is forming new saints whose chief characteristic is this spirit, and it is bringing forth new orders for the special purpose of serving Christ in his poor. It is this inspiration also which evil has seized and perverted into the false religion of humanity—that religion which, not content with denying God, usurps his dignity and declares in the face of Heaven that humanity *is* God! To this, the lowest depth of degradation into which the human intellect has ever fallen, pride has betrayed man, as pride hurled the fallen angels to hell. He who refuses to believe that the omnipotent God could unite our humanity to his own divinity and so elevate the former to unspeakable dignity, descends to the depth of finding God in man alone—man, who, looking into himself, sees only concupiscence and weakness, who knows absolutely nothing of the nature of his own existence, and who passes like a vapor, unable to tell from whence he comes or whither he goes! But though man as an individual passes into nothingness, humanity remains, these thinkers tell us. And is humanity—that is, man collectively—higher or nobler than man individually? As are units, so is the mass. As we find in the individual ignorance, weakness, selfishness, and crime, so we find these things marking every page of the history of mankind. Has even this age, with its prosperity and its inventions and its intellectual arrogance, improved upon the record of past ages in these respects? Does crime exist no longer? Do we hear no more of robbery and murder and assassination, of treachery between men and war between nations? Ah! lift up your eyes and see the whole earth groaning with misery and darkened with the shadow of wrong. See the rulers of the earth persecuting God's church with one hand while the other is held upon the throat of advancing revolution; see the rich forgetting that

they are the stewards of God's gifts, and the maddened poor rising up to take by force what is not their own, and then hear the voice of the age proclaiming the brotherhood of man and his inalienable rights of liberty and happiness!

"You smile at the satire. But in every false doctrine there is a soul of truth, perverted and misapplied, yet powerful to move the hearts of men. Such a soul is in these doctrines. Do you need for me to tell you where the age has learned them? They are like the broken memories which come to a wandering, sin-stained man of the holy traditions that his mother taught his youth. So, led far astray by false teachers and vain dreams, lost in misery and yearning for higher and better things, this poor humanity of our age looks wistfully back to its happier youth, remembers the great truths which its mighty mother taught, and, filled with their heavenly beauty, wrests them from her theology to form the false Utopias of our day. Is the brotherhood of mankind a new doctrine? You know that it is as old as the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Is the assertion of man's right to liberty and happiness new? Faith has always taught that he is free to choose his immortal destiny and to win an eternal happiness. Does the voice of the age proclaim that men are equal? The church has always declared that serf and king stand on the same plane before God. Has it a zeal to aid the wretched and relieve the poor? What is this zeal to the ardor which has animated her generations of saints, her countless army of religiouses and her missionaries, who to-day, as of old, go forth to shed their blood for the salvation of souls?

"No, the age has nothing to teach us which is new. It only distorts ancient and divine truths. We may go through article after article of the creed which is shaking the world to its centre, and find each article but a parody of the Catholic faith. Only, in place of the worship of God, we have as its centre the worship of humanity; and in place of the humility taught by the Son of God, the pride that will neither believe nor obey. And in this fact—the fact that under every modern idea lies a great but perverted truth—is an explanation of the powerful hold which these doctrines have upon a generation without knowledge of the science of God, a generation left in darkness by the rebellion of their forefathers against the light of divine revelation. Is it wonderful that, after wandering in countless mazes of error, humanity should longingly think of the hopes it has lost and strive to evoke out of its finite ima-

gination a vision of the infinite and celestial promise of God? Is it strange that the divine idea contained in the second great Commandment of the law should exert so strong a fascination even over those who deny the First Commandment, on which it rests, that they are filled with something akin to the spirit of martyrs, with a passionate devotion and an ardent zeal for the ideal of human happiness which they seek in vain to realize, and which they refuse to believe is like the mirage that betrays the traveller of the desert into burning sands and trackless wastes?

“Such a mirage is the dream of human progress, the Utopia of human perfection, which intoxicates and deludes multitudes in the present time. But among this multitude are many sincere souls who, after weary days of wandering, may pause and look around for the true city of God, whose wondrous battlements, whose domes and pinnacles, they have seen reflected on the clouds. Where shall they find her? Does any need to ask? In all the earth there is nothing like unto her. She is that city builded upon a mountain which cannot be hid. She alone, who stood by the cradle of civilization, is here to-day in all the beauty of her perpetual youth. Do you persecute her? O blind and foolish generation! combat is her life. She draws fresh vigor from it, and in a thousand battles she has triumphed, leaving her enemies dead upon the field. Come, then, and learn from her the true meaning and purpose of life. She alone can solve your perplexities, for she alone possesses truth in its entirety. She alone can teach you the true dignity of human nature, which this age proclaims without understanding, and the true brotherhood of mankind, which it denies in asserting; for she alone has an exact and perfect knowledge of both. She alone can satisfy every aspiration of the human soul and realize every ideal of human progress, for only by her aid can the world attain to that ‘deliverance of the nations,’ and that ‘increase of liberty, love, and peace among men,’ of which it dreams. Let us, then, yield ourselves to the spirit with which God inspires the age; let us labor to hasten the reign of his kingdom; let us burn with more active love for our brethren, and let us pray that this age—in which men, grown weary of denial, are seeking for truths to affirm—may rise from faith in humanity to faith in the Man-God whose Sacred Heart, at once human and divine, is the centre of the new creation, and in union with whom our fallen nature finds its sole dignity and its only hope.”

Dusk had fallen before the preacher finished, and, making the sign of the cross over the silent multitude before him, turned and disappeared, his white habit seeming to catch the last ray of light among the dim arches. From that moment until she found herself in the great square before the cathedral, with a soft evening sky overhead—primrose-tinted in the west, where the roofs of the tall houses were outlined against it—Sibyl Bertram felt like one in a dream. Then she looked up at this sky, and, turning to Mlle. d'Antignac, who was beside her, said:

"Have you ever seen a mirage?"

"No," the other answered. "Have you?"

"Yes, I have seen it in the Camargue. After I read *Mirèio* I gave mamma no peace until she consented to travel there. You know it is like a bit of Africa in Europe, and as we drove one day toward Les Saintes Maries I saw the mirage. It was wonderful—the exact reproduction of a battlemented city, with glorious Gothic towers and spires. Any one might have fancied it reality. I thought, while the preacher spoke, how well he had chosen his image."

"I thought it a very true image," said Mlle. d'Antignac.

"It was certainly forcible, to one who has seen the mirage," said Sibyl.

She said nothing more. Indeed, they were all rather silent as they walked in the direction of the Quai Voltaire. There was something in the expression of Armine's face which deterred Egerton from conversation; and he was himself still under the influence of the feeling which had laid hold of him in the cathedral and had been deepened and intensified by the words of which only a pale shadow has been here transcribed. Presently he found himself—he did not know how—joined by Mlle. d'Antignac, while Armine and Sibyl dropped behind them.

It was a pleasant hour for such a promenade along the quays. On one side the river flowed, bearing the sunset light on its breast; on the other were glimpses of narrow, picturesque streets, lined with those tall old houses which still exist on the left bank of the Seine. Usually Sibyl would have been keenly alive to every aspect of the scene; but now she hardly heeded it. Her mind—that ardent mind so quick to seize whatever was attractive—was occupied by the thoughts which had just been presented to it, and when at length she addressed Armine it was to say almost abruptly:

"Those were striking ideas. Were they new to you?"

"Not entirely," Armine answered. "I have often heard M. d'Antignac speak of the close resemblance between the teaching of the Catholic Church and the religion of humanity. But it was a new idea to me that the evil spirit of the age is only its good inspiration perverted. Yet it explains many things," she added thoughtfully.

"As, for example—?" said Sibyl, who had a strong inclination to draw her out on a subject which she had reason to know so well, and which had always exercised a great fascination over herself.

"Well, for one thing, the spirit of self-devotion and self-sacrifice of which the preacher spoke," the girl replied a little sadly. "It would astonish you if you could know how sincere this is in many of those whom the world calls Positivists and Socialists. They are ready even to lay down their lives for their brethren; and 'greater love than this hath no man.'"

"It would not astonish me," said Sibyl. "I know—I have long known—of the existence of this spirit, and it has made me desire to learn more of the ideal which inspired it."

Armine looked at her gravely.

"If you learned more," she said, "you would feel, as others have felt, the infinite pity of seeing such ardent faith and such passionate effort wasted in a cause so hopeless, and which, if gained, could only be so evil. You would feel as if your heart might almost break with sadness over the sight of an enthusiasm which counted life and all life's effort as nothing to give, in order that certain social and political dreams might be realized, which if realized would plunge the world into anarchy, take from mankind the hope of anything beyond this miserable life, and make existence far more unbearable than it is now. And then, at the end, to think that all this effort was for nothing—poured out like water on sand—when if it had been for God—"

The voice, which had deepened in earnestness as the speaker went on, suddenly paused; and Sibyl, understanding, said quickly:

"But what is generally known as 'work for God' seems to be selfish in its end, whereas such effort as this for humanity is at least nobly unselfish."

"It is likely," said Armine, "that we may be as much mistaken about what is work for God as about the best mode of

serving humanity. And it is possible to serve him for a selfish motive. But the noblest souls do not so serve him. They rise higher and higher above self until at last they end by annihilating it. One need know but little of the saints to know that."

"I confess that I know very little of them," said Sibyl. "But from what I do know they seem to have been absorbed in thinking of their own souls and of what their prospects were for eternal salvation."

Armine smiled. "It is plain that you know little," she said, "for no such spiritual egotist could be a saint. The saints are souls that are on fire for God's glory, for the coming of his kingdom on earth, of which we have just heard, and for the relief of the poor, the sick, and the suffering, whom the Son of God deigned to identify so completely with himself as to say that whatever is done to the least of these is done to *him*. The marvel is that there should be any poor left on earth after that had been said," the girl added, as if to herself. "The wonder is that every one does not rise and go forth to seek them!"

"And yet," said Sibyl, "we are told that the condition of the poor is nowhere so desperate as among Christian nations."

"I have heard that," Armine answered; for what idea connected with human progress could Sibyl Bertram suggest which this Socialist's daughter was not likely to have heard? "And when I went to M. d'Antignac and asked him what I should think of it, he simply gave me a volume of history and said: 'Read that.' But if I told you what I found there, Miss Bertram, it is probable that I might wound you."

"It is not at all probable," Sibyl answered. "I may safely say that if there is anything of which I *am* capable, it is of regarding abstract questions dispassionately and not as a partisan. The most astonishing thing connected with human nature to me is the manner in which people refuse to hear anything opposed to the set of opinions in which they chanced to be educated. I have no such opinions. I long ago cast them aside, and I have found nothing as yet to take their place."

Armine's grave and gentle eyes regarded her again, this time with something of compassion.

"I am sorry for you," she said simply. "It is terrible not to know what to believe of this mystery and riddle of life

which is all around us. I am told that there is a school of thinkers—should one call them thinkers?—who declare that an attitude of doubt is the only one possible to man. Could anything be worse? Never to *know* anything, never to possess any certainty of truth—why, faith in the worst of doctrines would, as a mental state, be preferable to that.”

“Yet,” said Sibyl, “such people look upon it as a kind of weakness to desire certainty. Oh! you do not know; you have not come in contact with the spirit of the day—” Then she stopped with a sudden recollection. “I am very foolish,” she said in a different tone. “You probably know much more than I do of that spirit. You have more reason to know.”

“Of a certain form of it I know a great deal,” Armine answered; “but it is not the form of which you speak. There is no attitude of doubt about the men I have known. They are strong in belief and positive in teaching. They do not say, ‘There may or there may not be a God—we cannot tell.’ They say, ‘God is a fable. Let us worship and serve humanity.’”

“It was that positiveness which always attracted me,” said Sibyl, “as well as their ardor in the cause of humanity. The dream seemed so beautiful—of elevating mankind, of banishing inequality and poverty and pain, as far as might be, from the face of the earth.”

“Pain can never be banished while sin and death remain,” said the soft voice at her side.

“I suppose the hope is a mirage,” said Sibyl, with a sigh—“a mirage which is indeed but a reflection of the old ideal of Christianity which the modern world has almost forgotten.”

“M. d’Antignac says that there was nothing which the world so quickly forgot, when it ceased to be Catholic, as the counsels of perfection,” said Armine, “and that they embody all, and more than all, that the religion of humanity desires to accomplish.”

“I think I must ask M. d’Antignac to tell me something of the counsels of perfection,” said Sibyl, smiling a little.

“You cannot do better,” answered Armine, as they turned in under the familiar door of the house where D’Antignac dwelt.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHEN they entered the room where D'Antignac lay they found his couch surrounded by a group of his friends. M. de Marigny, Godwin, the Abbé Neyron, and one or two others were there, and conversation as it is understood in France—which does not mean the talk of one or the aimless gossip of three or four, but the contact of trained minds in an intercourse which sharpens them, as steel is sharpened by steel, and from which results the highest form of mental enjoyment and the ability to give and take keen intellectual thrusts—was evidently in animated progress. The appearance of the new-comers caused a temporary lull, but the air of the *salon* was unmistakable. Photographed, one would have seen in the very attitude of the figures a reflection of the discussions in which they were engaged. The sight of so many people—though all of them were known to her—made Armine shrink a little; but Miss Bertram's eyes brightened. Nothing pleased her better than to sniff the air of such combats, even from afar, and to mingle in them was her delight.

It was natural that every one should look at her as she came forward; for beauty always commands this tribute, and hers was a very striking type of beauty, rendered more striking by the absence of self-consciousness. "Who is she?" the Abbé Neyron asked aside of M. de Marigny, and when he heard he said, "It is a noble face."

Meanwhile Sibyl, putting her hand in that which D'Antignac held out to her, said with a smile: "You see I have come to be a listener."

"More than that, I hope," he replied, smiling in turn. "We cannot afford to lose the element which you will bring into our conversation."

"I am afraid to ask what that is," she said. "I fear that if *you* are candid, *I* may not be complimented."

"Am I ever other than candid?" he asked. "But I will leave the answer to M. de Vigny, whom you will permit me to present to you. He is an author, and consequently an adept in phrases."

"I am aware," said Sibyl turning her brilliant glance on the gentleman thus presented, "that M. de Vigny is an adept in phrases, but I do not think that excuses you for transferring a difficulty to his shoulders."

"There can be no difficulty in perceiving that it is the

element of the charming which mademoiselle must bring into any conversation," said M. de Vigny, with a bow.

"I knew that I could trust his power of intuition to divine that," said D'Antignac quietly. "Now sit down, mademoiselle, and tell us where you have been."

"I have been to Notre Dame," answered Sibyl, after she had acknowledged M. de Vigny's gallantry with an altogether charming smile, "and I have heard a sermon which gives me many ideas that may not be new in themselves, but are very new to me."

"I beg to congratulate you, then," said M. de Vigny. "Nothing can be a greater pleasure than to receive new ideas, but nothing, alas! is more rare. Everything that can be said on any and every subject has been said to an exhaustive degree."

"Even if that were true there are fresh auditors all the time for whom things need to be said over again," remarked D'Antignac. "But it is not true. New ideas are possible, because human life is all the time changing its aspects—of course within certain fixed limitations—and though I do not admit that in all respects

"The thoughts of man are widened with the process of the suns,"

there can be no doubt that in some respects they are. And you, De Vigny, should be slow to declare that 'everything which can be said has been said,' else where is the excuse for your new book?"

"Perhaps it has none," said M. de Vigny, lifting his shoulders with an airy gesture.

"Your readers, monsieur, would be slow to admit that," said Sibyl, seeing her way to repay the compliment of a moment back.

"You are very kind, mademoiselle," replied the author; "but my readers are only pleased by seeing their own reflections in what I produce. It is like the fascination of gazing in a mirror, and they cry: 'Ah! that excellent De Vigny—how artistic, how lifelike his pictures are!' They value them merely as the representatives of a reality with which they are familiar, and not for any element of originality which they possess."

"That is your own fault, or rather the fault of the school to which you belong," said D'Antignac. "You aim only to present representations of a reality with which every

one is familiar—not types of an ideal to which human nature may aspire, and does now and then attain.”

“This is the day of reality in art,” said De Vigny. “We leave the pursuit of the ideal to politics.”

“And consequently art, instead of being an elevating, has become a degrading influence,” said D’Antignac. “Genius is occupied in painting the diseases of humanity, not its infinite pathos, its deep tragedy, or its possibilities of nobleness.”

“You are a moralist, and moralists make the mistake of regarding everything from an ethical point of view,” said M. de Vigny. “It has been long settled that it is within the province of art to treat *all* topics, and the value of a book—we are speaking, I presume, of what is known as fiction—lies in the truthfulness of its delineation of the subject and types portrayed.”

“Then a painter might represent a hospital ward with perfect fidelity, and the picture would be worth as much as the ‘Transfiguration’ of Raphael,” said the quiet voice of the abbé.

“In my opinion it would be worth more, inasmuch as it would increase our knowledge of humanity as it lives and suffers around us,” said M. de Vigny.

“A very good end,” said the abbé, “if it also increased our charity and pity for this poor humanity; but experience teaches that the result of the brutal realism—I can use no other term—which distinguishes much of our art is not only repulsive but debasing. I walked through the *Salon* the other day,” pursued the speaker, “and the effect of those acres of canvas devoted to vicious or ignoble or merely trivial subjects—for the exceptions were few and not remarkable—was so depressing that I was forced to go to the Louvre and refresh myself for half an hour with the old masters. And in literature it is the same story. Forgive me, my dear De Vigny, if I say that after I have read one of our modern dramas or romances I am fain to take the bitter taste out of my mouth by going to those old masters of classic antiquity who, pagans though they were, recognized the truth that a noble literature must possess an ethical purpose and be bound by ethical laws.”

“But when we read Sophocles or Euripides,” said M. de Vigny, “it is for their perfection of form, not for their ethical purpose.”

"Form is but the body which clothes the soul of the writer's purpose," said D'Antignac. "Without that soul—a soul high enough and strong enough to touch the noblest aspirations of mankind—form alone cannot hope to secure immortality for any human production. See, as an example, the paintings of which M. l'Abbé speaks. Every one can perceive that the artists have perfect command of what may be called the mechanism of art. Their knowledge of perspective, of anatomy, of the use of color, is far in advance of the great old painters; but, for lack of noble subjects, modern art is trivial where it is not vicious, and no one can believe that it will live."

"But if the age does not furnish noble subjects are its poor painters with pen and pencil to blame?"

"Men are too apt to forget that each one helps to make the age," said the abbé gravely.

While talk went on in this fashion tea had been brought in, and Mlle. d'Antignac, who detected in Armine an intention of slipping away, frustrated it by placing her at the table on which Cesco arranged the urn and cups, and asking her to pour out the tea. "For I must go and talk to Signor Arlotti," she said, indicating a gentleman who was speaking with M. de Marigny. "He is an old Roman friend of Raoul's."

Perceiving Armine thus occupied, Egerton came up and asked if he could render any assistance. Informed that he could not, he sat down by the side of the table to drink his own cup of tea and wait until every one else was served. Then, when Cesco had been despatched with the last cup, he said:

"I have been watching Miss Bertram's face. It is pleasant to see her keen enjoyment of the atmosphere which she finds here."

"She seems specially fitted to enjoy it," said Armine, glancing also across the room at the mobile face, which was indeed full of animation. "She appears to be one of those for whom society is made, and who are specially fitted to adorn it."

"She adorns society, certainly, and society admires her very much," said Egerton. "But I think she puzzles it a little also, for her attitude is generally somewhat scornful and suggestive of the fact that it is not equal to her requirements. But *here* she is evidently in an element which suits and delights her."

"I cannot fancy her scornful," said Armine. "I have never seen her other than full of graciousness—and not without something of humility also," she added, recalling their late conversation.

Egerton could not forbear a smile. "Humility is the last characteristic with which I should credit Miss Bertram," he said.

"Perhaps you do not know a great deal of her," said Armine. "I do not mean that *I* know a great deal," she continued, "but sometimes it will chance that a single conversation reveals more of a person than one might learn by the surface-intercourse of years."

"I am glad if Miss Bertram has revealed herself to you," said Egerton. "If I may judge by my own experience, you have a singular power of saying the right word at the right time and in the right manner."

"You are too kind," she said in a low tone. "You think too much of any words which I may have uttered to you. It was God who enlightened your mind and touched your heart and made—some things impossible to you."

"Perhaps so," Egerton answered; "but God works, does he not, by human instruments?"

"Sometimes—yes. But do not think of me as such an instrument."

"I must think of you as I have found you," answered the young man, with a tone of feeling in his voice. "But I will not talk of it, if you do not wish me to do so. We were speaking of Miss Bertram. She is clever, as you have no doubt perceived, and she has been very much attracted by certain modern theories about life and conduct. Therefore it is well for her to meet you. She knows what your experience has been, and your opinions derive greater weight with her from that experience."

"Any weight which they possess must be derived wholly from it," said Armine, "else they would have none. With regard to Miss Bertram, I think I understand what you mean. I should say that she has great natural nobleness of character, and, like many noble souls, she has been fascinated by a dream of ardor and self-sacrifice and labor for the common good of humanity. That sermon this afternoon seemed preached for her."

"And not for her alone," said Egerton.

"I did not mean that," said Armine. "There was much

in it for all of us. I have often observed that great truths seem to contain what is necessary for many individual needs."

"And all our needs are different," said Egerton. "For example, I need faith—not intellectual conviction, but something spiritual which I have not got and cannot give myself; Miss Bertram needs to be convinced of the unsubstantial nature of the dreams with which she has been fascinated; and you—well, I do not know what *you* need, but I am sure it is something very different from either."

Armine smiled a little, but did not reply, for at that moment M. de Marigny approached them.

"I have come to beg for another cup of tea, mademoiselle," he said, "and to hope that you are well."

"Thanks, M. le Vicomte; I am very well," she answered as she filled the cup which he held toward her. Then she looked up at him with the familiar wistful light in her eyes. "And you?" she said.

He bowed. "I too am very well—the better for having been out of Paris for a day or two. Business called me away, and I was glad to forget the turmoil of life here for a short time."

"It is strange," said Egerton, "to hear a Frenchman speak of being glad to be out of Paris and away from the turmoil of its life."

"Paris means different things to different people," said the vicomte. "To me it is simply a battle-field, and not even the charm of its boulevards and its *salons* can counterbalance the weariness which I suffer in the Chamber. And not only weariness—that would be easily borne—but pain and shame and despair for the immediate future of France."

"It is hard to maintain spirit when one is fighting a hopeless battle," said Egerton; "and the battle which you are fighting against the Radical element seems at present very hopeless."

"The battle against Conservative apathy is still more hopeless," said the vicomte. "Indeed, it is in that chiefly that the hopelessness of the contest lies. Radicalism must run its course and reach its end after a time—for destructive forces do not halt—but it is Conservative apathy which gives it such great power for evil, and which will make the end so terrible. I do not wish to be a prophet of dark things, however," he broke off with a smile, "and no soldier should lose courage because the fight is hard."

Egerton saw that Armine's eyes were full of sympathy as she looked at the speaker. "I am sure that you do not lose courage because the fight is hard," she said, "but only because it seems hopeless—if, indeed, you lose courage at all."

"I am at least often tempted to discouragement," he said. "But the cause in which we fight is not wholly earthly; it is to save the faith as well as the honor of France; so we may leave the issue to God. *Apropos*, I am told by my cousin that you heard a very good conference at Notre Dame this afternoon, mademoiselle. I am glad that you were more fortunate than on the afternoon when I was your guide—into the roof."

"Yes, I was much more fortunate," said Armine, smiling; "but I have not forgotten that you resigned the certainty of hearing on that occasion, in order to give me the probability of doing so. I wish, therefore, that you had been rewarded by being there this afternoon."

"I thought of going, but, on consideration, preferred coming here. I knew I should find D'Antignac alone; and there is no one whose society I enjoy more, or from whom I derive more benefit."

"Ah! I can well imagine that," said Armine, with the tone of feeling which always came into her voice when she spoke of D'Antignac. "But you did not find him alone, after all!"

"Yes, I was fortunate enough to anticipate the other visitors by an hour."

He paused. It seemed to Egerton that he was about to speak of what passed in that hour, so he rose and moved away, mindful of the peculiar position in which these two people stood to each other. But the vicomte said nothing farther of his conversation with D'Antignac. He seemed chiefly anxious to put Armine at ease with himself, and the topics which he chose were as far as possible removed from any that could disturb her. When Mlle. d'Antignac joined them presently she found him talking of the wild legends of the Breton coast, while Armine's eyes were full of interest and pleasure as she listened.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

NEVERTHELESS Egerton was right in his instinct. Armine had been the topic of conversation between M. de Marigny and D'Antignac, though the former, in his slight hesitation, had felt no inclination to allude to the fact. Nothing, indeed, could have been farther from his intention; yet when he spoke of the hour spent alone with his friend it was impossible not to pause for an instant over the recollection of the discussion which had for its subject the person to whom he spoke, and the nature of which would so greatly have amazed that person. For he had greeted D'Antignac by saying:

"I have come because I hoped to find you alone, and because I wish to tell you of a decision at which I have arrived."

"A decision relating to yourself?" D'Antignac asked, full of interest at once.

"To myself—yes," the vicomte answered. "And also relating to another in whom your interest is as great as in myself—to Mlle. Duchesne."

D'Antignac looked at him silently for an instant. Then he said in a grave tone: "You are thinking of marrying her, is it not so?"

"Yes," the other answered quietly, "I have been thinking of it for some time, but I have now passed that point. I have resolved upon it—that is, I have resolved upon offering myself, unless you believe that there is no hope for me."

"My dear friend," said D'Antignac, "I not only believe, I *know*, that there is no hope for you, and I wish that I had spoken sooner to tell you so."

The calm positiveness of his tone startled the vicomte. "How can you know?" he asked.

"By a very simple means," D'Antignac answered. "Egerton told me some time ago that Duchesne had given him an embarrassing and painful charge—that with his last breath he bade him tell Armine that she should on no account marry *you*."

The blood sprang to De Marigny's face, and he lifted his head with a gesture of unconscious haughtiness. "How could he have dreamed of such a thing?" he said quickly.

"By his knowledge of her possible claim upon Marigny," D'Antignac answered, "and by his belief that such a plan would suggest itself to you as a mode of compromise. It was a natural conclusion—on his part."

"On his part, perhaps so; but on mine—can any one imagine that it would be natural on mine?"

"There are many people who would readily imagine it," answered D'Antignac; "but not any one who knew you well, even if he did not know the position Armine has taken, which renders compromise wholly unnecessary."

"There is no question of it at all," said the vicomte. "And however anxious I might be that she should accept whatever is rightfully hers, I should certainly not think of endeavoring to bestow it upon her in this manner. There can be no doubt that in the majority of cases our French mode of marriage serves its purpose admirably; but it has never commended itself to me personally. I have always felt that if I married I must know much more of, and feel much more for, the woman I marry than the majority of Frenchmen think at all necessary. Long ago I had my dreams of what that woman should be, but as I grew older I perceived that such dreams were not likely to be realized." He paused a moment, then in a somewhat altered tone went on: "And yet I have found them realized, for I do not think I ever dreamed of an ideal more sympathetic, more gentle, or more brave than this girl who has so strangely come into my life."

"So strangely indeed," said D'Antignac, "so against all ordinary rules of probability, that it seems as if you had been brought together for some more than ordinary purpose. Considering this, and considering, too, how entirely she is fitted to fulfil all your dreams, I am tempted to think that possible of which you have spoken; and yet I know that it is not possible."

"Why not?" asked the other. "On account of Duchesne's prohibition? I do not regard that as of any importance."

"You may not; it is natural that you should not," D'Antignac answered. "But I am sure that Armine will regard it as of very great importance."

"Has she been told of it?"

"Not yet. Egerton came to me in great perplexity, and I advised him to defer telling her. It seemed unnecessary; and I knew that it would make intercourse with you more painful to her."

"If she had been told it might explain her reluctance to hold such intercourse," said the vicomte thoughtfully. "I have always felt that it was not in herself that the motive of reluctance lay, but in some influence strong enough to dictate her conduct."

"The motive lay in her father's command. When they were at Marigny he forbade her ever speaking to you again. Her feeling is so strong on this point that even if she did not hear of his dying charge I do not think she could be persuaded to consider the idea of marrying you."

"You ought to know her better than I," said the vicomte. "And yet—"

He paused. At that moment there came to him the recollection of Armine as he had seen her last, and the touch of the hand which in answer to his appeal had been laid in his own. He remembered how that appeal had influenced her, how he had been able to strike a chord to which all the deep feeling and all the sweet reasonableness of her nature responded; and he could not doubt that he might do so again, that again he might point out that the first duty which she owed to her father was the duty of not perpetuating hatred by allowing it to exercise any influence over her conduct, and that again the delicate hand might be laid in his—but with another meaning. It could not be said that these thoughts were written on his face, yet D'Antignac, regarding him, saw that he was not discouraged, and that there was even something of a smile in the deep, dark eyes.

"You do not agree with me," he said. "You have hope?"

"I may be mistaken," M. de Marigny answered, "but, yes, I have hope. I am never with her that I do not feel as if I understood all that she is feeling, so complete is the sympathy between us; and therefore I believe that I can induce her to regard this command of her father's in its true light."

"And do you think that *it* alone would influence her to refuse to marry you?"

Again the blood mounted to the vicomte's face. "No," he said quickly. "Do not understand me as meaning to imply anything so presumptuous. I only mean that if she bases a refusal on this, which you seem to consider the chief obstacle, I should hope to be able to overcome it. She may refuse on other grounds altogether. I *cannot* tell, and certainly I have no great reason for hope."

There was silence for a minute or two. D'Antignac was evidently reflecting, and when he spoke it was to say meditatively: "If you have no great reason for hope I have very little; yet I believe that such a marriage would be for the happiness of you both, and therefore I am anxious that no effort should be spared to make it possible. So it is a question with me whether it would not be well for you to learn what Armine—herself, uninfluenced

—thinks of it, and how she feels toward you, before she hears of her father's prohibition."

"What would be gained by that?"

"This: that if she considers your proposal favorably, and above all if she entertains any regard for yourself, you will have a powerful advantage in combating her feeling about her father."

"That is true," said the vicomte; "but would I not also bring upon her a worse struggle than if she knew of the prohibition from the first? I fear so. Think, *mon ami*, of the nature which we both know so well—though you far better than I—of its deep feeling, its capacity for suffering, and its loyalty of instinct! Think, then, of the result if she should conquer the influence of what she already knows to have been her father's feeling sufficiently to entertain my suit, and to yield the heart without which consent would be to me valueless, only to hear *then* of this command from the grave! You know what she would suffer; and I cannot be in any degree accountable for such suffering, even if I might so gain my end."

"You are right," said D'Antignac. "And I—in my eagerness for the happiness of you both—was wrong. But I warn you that if she hears of the prohibition before she hears of your suit the latter will be hopeless."

"Then," said M. de Marigny, "since we are agreed that it will not be right to wait until afterwards, there is but one alternative—that she hears of both at the same time; and you, my dear D'Antignac, are the person best fitted to inform her, if you will undertake the office for the sake of our old friendship."

"I know of nothing within my power which I would not undertake for the sake of our old friendship," D'Antignac answered; "but you are, after all, following the conventional custom of French marriages in not pleading your own cause."

"I shall not be backward in pleading my cause when the time to plead it comes," said the vicomte; "but I have two reasons for asking you to undertake this duty—first, because I do not wish to omit the least respect due to the woman I desire to marry; and, secondly, because only in this way can she hear of my suit and of her father's prohibition together; while at the same time she will learn, from one whose opinion has the utmost weight with her, how far that prohibition has, or ought to have, binding force on her conscience or conduct."

D'Antignac shook his head. "You overrate my influence," he said. "On that point she will listen to her own feeling rather than to my voice, even though we may consider it the voice of reason. You could ask nothing of me that I would refuse, however, so I shall undertake the duty; but I earnestly urge you not to hope for a successful result."

"I am willing to leave the result to God," said the vicomte quietly. "Nothing happens by chance. So when one has prayed and has put one's affair in the hands of a friend whom one can trust in the fullest sense, one should be resigned to failure, if failure come. That does not sound like an ardent lover, perhaps. Yet, if not an ardent, I think that I should prove a tender one. And a man who cannot trust God seems to me hardly deserving of trust himself."

"It should be easy to trust Him for everything," said the man whom He had so heavily smitten. "And I will try not to set my heart too much on the hope of earthly happiness for two who are worthy of it."

There was little more to be said after this, and the conversation was soon ended by the entrance of other *habitues*, until the circle grew to that which was found by the party returning from Notre Dame. Nor did the arrivals cease then. While the vicomte was still talking to Armine at the tea-table the door opened, and a lady, with that appearance of exquisite elegance only to be seen in Frenchwomen of high rank, entered, followed by an elderly, rotund gentleman. Mlle. d'Antignac went forward quickly to meet them, and M. de Marigny, turning to Armine, said: "That is my sister—Mme. de St. Arnaud. I am glad of an opportunity to make you known to each other. You will allow me to do so?"

"Oh! no," said Armine, shrinking involuntarily. "Pray do not think of it! Madame de St. Arnaud is a great lady; what has she to do with me, or I with her?"

"She, at least, has something to do with you," the vicomte replied, with a smile. "She has heard the story of the kinswoman who has lately been added to our house."

The quick, pained look which the girl gave almost startled him. "Can it be possible you have told her *that*?" she said. "Oh! I am sorry—I am very sorry!"

"Why should you be sorry?" he asked, struck by the genuine distress of her tone.

"Because it was so useless," she answered; "because I hoped that the matter might rest as if it had never been known

to any one, or as if Mr. Egerton had regarded my wishes. But I thought that *you* promised!" she added in a different tone—a tone of unconscious trust and reproach which went straight to the heart of her listener.

"Whatever I promised," he said gently, "I have certainly intended to fulfil. But I do not think that secrecy was included in the bond. And in telling my sister I had a reason, which you will know later. And, since she is anxious to know you, surely you will not refuse to know her? Believe me, she is not in the least formidable."

"She may not be," said Armine, glancing across the room at the graceful, high-bred woman talking to D'Antignac with a charming air of affectionate deference, "yet she and I can have nothing in common, so I beg you to excuse me."

"You told me once that you and I had nothing in common," said the vicomte, "but I hope I convinced you that we have much in common. The same is true of my sister. I think I may safely promise that you will find her very sympathetic."

"I do not doubt it," said the girl, "but there may be reasons why one should not even seek sympathy from those whose lives lie far apart from our own. No"—as she saw the vicomte about to interpose—"do not speak again of what we discussed and settled the other day. Nothing can be different from what it is, and nothing could be more painful to me than to be presented to the Comtesse de St. Arnaud as an intruder into her ancient house."

"It was in a totally different character that I wished to present you," said M. de Marigny in a tone full of restrained feeling.

"I am sure of that," she said quickly. "Do not misunderstand me or think I am not grateful for the honor you wish to do me. But I hope you will forgive me if—in order that there may be no question of it—I leave you now."

She rose as she spoke, with the evident intention of retreating through a door behind her, but paused as if reluctant to go without a word of assent from him.

He smiled a little and held out his hand. "I doubt," he said, "if you could do anything which I would not forgive. I will press nothing that is painful to you. My sister must wait for another opportunity to know you, and I reluctantly bid you good-evening, if it is your pleasure to leave us."

"You are always kind," she said in a tone which robbed

the words of their conventional meaning and gave them a deeper significance. "It is merely an accident that I am here—I have never been present before on one of the occasions when M. and Mlle. d'Antignac receive their friends—and it is not the place for me. I should have retired earlier but for this"—she indicated the tea-equipage—"but now I am at liberty to say adieu."

Her eyes gave emphasis to the gentle salutation. Then she lifted the *portière* behind her and disappeared.

CHAPTER XL.

"WELL," said Miss Dorrance when she next met her friend, "I hear from mamma that you and Mr. Egerton went amicably together to Notre Dame, after all. I hope that you enjoyed yourselves."

"That depends upon your definition of enjoyment," answered Miss Bertram. "We heard a good sermon—which was what we went for."

"A good sermon!" Miss Dorrance lifted her eyes to heaven. "What an idea—to spend a beautiful, bright Sunday afternoon in hearing a sermon!"

"It was certainly more appropriate to spend it in the Bois," said Sibyl, with a laugh. "Well, we went afterwards to M. d'Antignac's."

"Where you found the usual 'feast of reason and flow of soul,' of course."

"That is a very hackneyed quotation," said Miss Bertram, "but it describes exactly what we found—what is usually to be found in the D'Antignac *salon*. I date an era in my life from the day I first entered that *salon*."

"An era of what kind?" asked her friend curiously.

"Of enlarged ideas, for one thing," was the reply.

Miss Dorrance made a slight but very expressive grimace. "I think your ideas were quite large enough before," she observed; "a little too large for convenience, in fact. One should consult convenience in one's ideas, as in everything else, in my opinion. One might as well wear clothes too large for one as to have ideas ridiculously unsuited to one's circumstances and surroundings."

"If some of us fitted our ideas to our circumstances and surroundings they would certainly be small enough," said

Sibyl. "I cannot flatter you that metaphor is your forte, my dear Laura. The narrowest circumstances need not prevent our entering on that heritage of great ideas which is, thank God! open to us all."

Miss Dorrance glanced round the artistic, luxurious room in which they were sitting. To her the phrase used had but one significance. "Your circumstances are certainly very narrow," she said drily.

"They are not very wide in the material sense—which is probably what you mean," answered Sibyl—"but in the spiritual and mental sense they have been narrow indeed."

"You are flattering to your friends."

"To my friends?" said the other, with a slight smile. "Oh! no. I was not speaking of my friends, who are few—as one's friends must always be—but of the large number of indifferent people who form one's acquaintance and make one's social atmosphere. And what has my atmosphere been? Simply that of a society bent on frivolous pleasure, measuring everything by a material standard, and not even redeemed from inanity by intellectual activity. Is it any wonder that when I entered another atmosphere, where people are not weighed by the amount of money or the number of fashionable acquaintances they possess, where all that is best in one is quickened and all that is noblest brought forth, that I felt as if I had passed into another world?"

In her energy—speaking, as she was, from her heart—the speaker probably forgot who was her listener. Laura Dorrance's eyes opened wider and wider, until it was evident that only lady-like decorum prevented her from expressing her feelings by a whistle; and at Miss Bertram's last words she shrugged her shoulders with a gesture of one who gives up a hopeless matter.

"*Exaltée* is no word for you, my dear," she said. "You have soared far beyond any region where I can follow. Poor Cousin Duke! What will he do? The clouds are not a congenial region to him either."

Miss Bertram looked haughty, as she usually did at allusions of this kind; but she made no reply, and Laura went on:

"He was disconsolate on Sunday. At least he was very disagreeable, and I believe that is usually a sign of disconsolateness. He had hardly a word for any of us. I never saw him in such a bad temper before."

"It is a good thing, then, that I did not accompany you," observed Sibyl quietly.

"What shameful affectation!" returned the other. "As if you did not know that *that* was the matter! One must confess it was provoking, after arranging an afternoon's pleasuring with the lady of one's love, to be coolly thrown over for a sermon at Notre Dame."

"I wish that you would be kind enough to spare me such remarks," said Miss Bertram coldly. "They are exceedingly disagreeable and in very bad taste."

"How can the truth be in bad taste?" asked Miss Dorrance, nowise abashed. "And a truth that you must know as well as I; for how can you help knowing that Cousin Duke is in love with you?—though I have told him that he might as well go to the Louvre and adore the Venus de Milo. But nobody ever listens to warning in a case of the kind." She ended with a shake of the head.

Despite her vexation Sibyl could not restrain a laugh.

"From your tone one would think you had been delivering such warnings for half a century," she said. "But of all people who could possibly be in need of them, I should take Mr. Talford to be the last. It is absurd even to utter the word 'love' in connection with him."

"He is not enthusiastic or romantic," Laura admitted, "but I really think you do him injustice in believing that he is not capable of being in love. He certainly is in love with you."

To which Miss Bertram replied, "Nonsense!" and, rising, walked across the room, saying: "If you want me to go shopping with you I will go, on condition that you do not allude to this subject again."

It was a condition Miss Dorrance was willing enough to accept for the sake of having the benefit of her friend's taste in the shopping which is the apparently inexhaustible occupation of American women in Paris. But Sibyl soon found that it is not possible to thrust a subject aside because one person's lips have been sealed upon it. When she returned home after several hours spent among *magasins* and *modes*, who should she find in the drawing-room, quietly talking to her mother and evidently awaiting her arrival, but Mr. Talford.

She was too much a woman of the world to make any change in her usual manner of greeting him; but, this greeting over, she did not bestow much attention on him. "I am

tired to death!" she said, sitting down with an air of exhaustion. "I do not know that shopping has ever been reckoned among the most fatiguing things of life; but in my experience there is nothing to compare with it for tiresomeness. After two or three hours spent among *chiffons* of all descriptions and in deciding between innumerable varieties of styles, I feel absolutely overcome with mental as well as physical fatigue."

"One may perhaps be permitted to say that you do not look so," observed Mr. Talford, with a smile.

"It is only a proof, then, of how far looks may belie feelings," she replied, not very well pleased—"for surely when I say that I am tired he ought to take leave!" she thought.

On this, as on many other subjects, however, Mr. Talford differed with her. When a young lady with the most charming color imaginable and every appearance of vigor declares herself tired to death from that which is generally held to be the most fascinating amusement of her sex, few men would feel bound to very strict credulity; and credulity was not this gentleman's failing. He only answered, with a smile: "Then I should recommend you to refresh yourself at once with a cup of tea—which may be an interested suggestion on my part, since Mrs. Bertram has promised me one."

"And I have only been waiting for Sibyl's arrival to order it," said Mrs. Bertram, ringing the bell.

Tea was brought in, and Sibyl resigned herself to make the best of Mr. Talford, since it was very plain that he had no intention of departure. And, as a means to this end, she dismissed Laura's assertion with regard to him from her mind, saying to herself that a man of so little sentiment and so much sense had no doubt long since understood her manner and accepted the conclusion rising from it. Moreover, her mother's presence was a shield; so, with an agreeable consciousness of safety, she forgot her fatigue and was talking easily and pleasantly when a ring of the door-bell was followed by the appearance of a servant summoning Mrs. Bertram from the room.

Sibyl longed to telegraph with her eyes, "Come back immediately"; but the fear of betraying any sense of danger deterred her. And, after all, she said to herself, what was there to fear? She had been alone with Mr. Talford often before without his indicating the least intention of falling at her feet or committing any equivalent absurdity. Why should she

suspect him of any such intention now? Laura's nonsense had infected her, she thought, and so, leaning back carelessly in her chair, a lovely picture in her becoming out-door costume, with her tea-cup in her hand, she went on talking lightly of the many topics which, like motes in the sunshine, fly about Paris.

But presently she began to observe that Mr. Talford was somewhat absent-minded and replied a little at random—which was not remarkable, since he was in fact saying to himself, "Shall I? or shall I not? Is it worth while? or is it not?" Perceiving his failing attention, Sibyl's power of talk also failed, and, finishing rather disconnectedly a story that she was telling, she began to cast about in her mind for an excuse to end the *tête-d-tête*. But it was too late.

"I wonder," said Mr. Talford, looking up as she paused, "if you will forgive my wandering attention when I tell you that it was because I was thinking of you that I did not listen to you."

"The wandering attention does not matter in the least," she replied, with a heightened color. "*Raconteurs* are born, not made, and the birthright was not mine; but I thought that story of Gambetta so good, when I heard it the other day at M. d'Antignac's, that I was led to attempt to repeat it. *Eh bien*, let us talk of something else. Who is the favorite for the Grand Prix?"

"I am not even aware whether there is a favorite for the Grand Prix," replied Mr. Talford. "My thoughts just now are set upon quite another prize. My dear Miss Bertram"—he paused slightly—"I think that you must know what I feel for you."

The thing was inevitable. Sibyl recognized it and resigned herself. "If he *will* force the matter I can only get over it as soon as possible!" she thought. Aloud she answered with sufficient self-possession:

"Why should you think so? Does one often know with any certainty what others feel or think regarding one? And, indeed" (hastily), "it is much better not to know, but simply to take it for granted that one is moderately liked and appreciated."

"Moderately liked and appreciated you could not possibly be," said the man, who had gone too far to draw back now under any discouragement. "You are made to inspire strong feeling. You certainly must be aware of that, at least."

"I do not think I can plead guilty of being aware even

of that," she answered. "And I cannot say that I like the idea. Moderate appreciation is as much as I desire. But"—with a last effort to escape—"personal discussions are always unpleasant. Pray let us change the subject."

Mr. Talford grew a little pale—his first sign of emotion.

"This," he said quietly, "is mere fencing. You know what I wish to say to you. You know that I love you."

The words were uttered. But it is safe to say that their effect astonished Sibyl as much as himself. She had intended to refuse his offer in whatever form it might be couched, courteously though decidedly; and she was not prepared for the sudden impulse which made her answer, with something akin to scorn:

"No, Mr. Talford, I neither know nor believe anything of the kind. You may wish to marry me, but I am quite sure that you do not love me."

The unexpected nature of the reply and the quick flash in her eyes so much astonished Mr. Talford that he had at the moment no thought for resentment. "And may I ask," he said after an instant's pause, "how you can possibly be sure of such a thing?"

"How can I be sure of it?" she repeated, with the same ringing tone of faintly-veiled scorn. "Because, Mr. Talford, I know *you*; because throughout our whole acquaintance you have been revealing yourself to me—you have been revealing your absolute want of faith in all that elevates human nature and makes love possible. You have been declaring, even with a sort of pride, that you have no belief in honor, or nobleness, or virtue. Neither heroism nor holiness exists for you—neither the soul of man nor the majesty of God. You hold yourself to be simply an animal, and you hold all men and women to be like you. Am I not right, then, in saying that it is impossible love should exist for you? For love *means* all that you deride—it means honor, and faith, and respect, and a share in the immortality of the soul in which it is born. These things are empty names to you? Well, so is your love to me."

She had not known how far the force of suddenly-aroused feeling would carry her until she reached this point, and, with the last words, paused—her eyes glowing, and her whole face full of eloquent expression. If Mr. Talford had not been a man who kept himself well in hand and was not easily thrown off his guard by sudden surprise, this most unexpected

arraignment would certainly have confounded him. As it was, after a moment of absolute astonishment he answered with sufficient quietness:

"If I understand rightly, you mean to assert that you do not believe in my love for you because I do not believe in certain fancies that have captivated your imagination. But does it not strike you that the one fact has no connection with the other fact? If I have no faith, for example, in the existence of the soul—which no man has ever been able to prove—what has that to do with the positive fact that I love you, whom I see and know? Let us put such questions aside. They are only of importance to fanatics, and I am sure that you are not one of those."

"I am certainly not a fanatic," she answered, "but one need not be a fanatic to perceive that to deny the existence of the soul is to deprive love of all its dignity. I know," she went on, "that many men are inconsistent enough to combine with such denial a belief in the spiritual side of our nature. But you, Mr. Talford, do not. You glory in your materialism, and in your own mind you have dragged all creation down to the level on which you live—that dreary level of universal scepticism which refuses to acknowledge the existence of anything noble or elevated. Do you comprehend, then, what I mean when I say that the word love on your lips has no meaning to me, or else a meaning which I disdain?"

"I fear that I do not comprehend," he answered, after another short pause of astonishment; "but that is no doubt owing to the grossness of my materialism and my lack of spiritual conceptions. My dear Miss Bertram, all this, if you will pardon me, is folly! Pray let us talk like sensible and practical people. Let me beg you to consider my offer on some other ground than that of unreal sentiment."

The scorn came again into her eyes as she looked at him, and into her voice when she spoke.

"Shall we consider it on the ground of your income, of the establishment you could afford, or the jewels you could give?" she asked. "There are women—you will find them in numbers—who can be bought by such things; but if you imagine that I am one of them, I can only say that you have never made a greater mistake in your life."

"I have been very far from imagining it," he answered; "but in what I *did* imagine I find that I have made even

a greater mistake. I thought you a woman of the world, whereas it seems that you are—"

"A visionary?" she said, as he stopped. "Yes, to you no doubt I am."

"I have always been aware of the visionary element in your character," he went on, "but I thought your practical sense was strong enough to keep it under control. And I still think it would do so but for associations which have unfortunately surrounded you of late."

"Those associations have saved me from much," she said—"from hopeless dreams or despairing scepticism; but they have not saved me from accepting you, Mr. Talford, for that I could never have done. You may believe this; and I should be glad if you would believe also that I am sorry to cause you even a transient disappointment."

She rose as she spoke, with an air of ending the interview, and he rose also; but he did not go. Despite her last words he could not believe that he had indeed offered himself in vain. And it was human nature—or at least masculine nature—that her refusal should have roused him to keener interest than he had thought possible before. So, standing face to face with her, he said:

"It is not a transient disappointment which you inflict. Whatever else you refuse to credit, believe *that*. And if you would give me leave to prove the love in which you have so little faith, I think I might convince you that it is worth as much as the love of any dreamer might be."

His evident earnestness touched her a little. She had not given him credit for any genuine feeling; but it seemed that it was genuine feeling which spoke now in his tone and glance.

"If it is not a transient disappointment I am sorry," she said; "but you must carry away no mistaken impression. I can never think of marrying you. But it may console you to know that, if I were capable of such a thing, I should no more please you than you could satisfy me. You have been attracted by me because you think that I would make a brilliant woman of the world and be a credit to your taste. You have judged me, as you judge all things else, on the surface; and consequently your judgment is mistaken. Unless I killed the better half of my nature I could never make what you desire—and, indeed, it is doubtful if I could make it then. I might forget spiritual things, but I could never be content with ma-

terial ones. I should eat out my heart with impatience and scorn if I were condemned to such a life as you would wish your wife to lead. Life to me is worth nothing if it has not some noble purpose. That sounds to you like idle folly, and I only speak of it in order that you may understand how far apart our natures and our lives lie."

Her voice had lost all its accent of disdain, and was only grave and gentle as she uttered these words; but both voice and manner expressed a remoteness which the man before her had a fine enough perception to realize. She spoke to him as to one on another plane of existence altogether; and, feeling this, he also felt that farther effort was vain. His suit was hopeless; there only remained for him to escape with what dignity he might.

"If this is your final decision I can only bow to it," he said. "It is useless to speak of my regret—regret for you as well as for myself, since I am quite sure that you will obtain nothing of value from the visionaries to whom you have surrendered yourself. But there only remains for me to bid you adieu."

He bowed with all his usual composure, and left the room without giving Sibyl time to utter a word had she been inclined to do so. But she only stood quite still where he left her, until the sound of the outer door closing told her that he was gone.

CHAPTER XLI.

"I HAVE had difficult things to do in my life," said D'Antignac to his sister the day after M. de Marigny's request, "but I hardly think I have ever had anything more difficult than the affair I have undertaken now. It would not be easy under any circumstances to tell Armine of Gaston's proposal, but to tell her in the same breath of her father's positive command to the contrary—if the matter were not so serious one might call it absolutely absurd!"

"I do not think," said Mlle. d'Antignac calmly, "that I should tell her of her father's command at all."

"That would be at least an easy means of escaping difficulty," said her brother, with a smile; "but would it be an honorable one?"

"And by what possible law of honor are you bound to be the executor of M. Duchesne's wishes?" she asked.

"I am not bound to be the executor of his wishes at all," D'Antignac answered. "But since I have prevented Egerton—who *is* so bound—from telling Armine of them, I am obliged to take the duty upon myself, or else be guilty of letting her make an important decision in ignorance of what might affect that decision."

"There are too many fine scruples in this matter, in my opinion," said Hélène. "You acknowledge that the command was a mere ebullition of groundless hate, yet you feel bound to tell Armine of it, in order that she may have an opportunity to sacrifice her own and Gaston de Marigny's happiness. I confess that I do not understand your point of view. I should suppress it, and feel that I was doing perfectly right."

"I am quite sure that you *would* do nothing of the kind, if the responsibility were laid upon you," said her brother. "But you forget that it is not wholly laid upon me. There is Egerton. If I did not speak, he would."

"Then he is very foolish," said she. "Leave him to me. I will make him hear reason."

"My dear Hélène," said D'Antignac, "one who did not know you as well as I do might think that you were really desirous to conceal this thing—"

"And so I am really desirous," she interposed. "I should not call it concealing, however. I should simply call it ignoring."

"Unfortunately, changing the name does not change the nature of a thing; and whatever you might call it, it would be concealment—of which there can be no question."

He spoke quietly, but with so much decision that Hélène said nothing more—for a minute. But she was in earnest in the view which she advocated. "What possible purpose can such a disclosure serve?" she said to herself. "Or, rather, is it not plain that it will very well serve the purpose of Duchesne, which certainly nobody should wish to serve?" And so she observed presently:

"If there is such a thing as defeating the designs of Heaven, I should say that you are about to defeat them. For Armine will never consent to marry M. de Marigny when she hears of her father's prohibition; yet such a marriage must have been intended. How else can we account for the manner in which they have been brought together?"

"I confess that the same idea has occurred to me," said

D'Antignac. "But it is not safe for us to decide with regard to the designs of Heaven. We cannot tell for what end these two have been permitted to know each other. A marriage would be very romantic, and, as far as we can judge, would insure their happiness. But happiness is not the end of life."

"It is a very good thing, however, if one may possess it with the blessing of God," said H  l  ne.

"With the blessing of God one cannot well miss it," her brother answered.

"You always contrive to silence one," said she. "But I am sure you would be as glad as I if the sad morning of Armine's life could turn into such a noonday as Gaston de Marigny's bride would have."

"I should be inexpressibly glad," D'Antignac replied in a tone of deep feeling. "But I am sure of this: that the clouds of the morning have done her no harm, and that her noonday is safe with God. He will give her what is best."

"And meanwhile you intend to tell her of her father's command?"

"I must."

To this there could be no answer, and Mlle. d'Antignac went away saying to herself that, after all, perhaps Raoul was right, yet mourning over the certain defeat of De Marigny's hopes. "And it would be such an ideal marriage!" she thought, as Egerton had thought before her; for, except D'Antignac, no one knew Armine so well as herself or recognized so clearly all the possibilities of the girl's nature. Then, with a turn of reflection, she blamed M. de Marigny for precipitation. "He should have waited: he should have given her time to forget and to become attached to him!" she said to herself; and then suddenly she remembered Armine's tone and look when she had spoken once or twice of the vicomte, and, with a pang of inconsistent apprehension, thought, "What if she is already attached to him! It may readily be; and if so, how terrible that will make the struggle! O my poor Armine! are you never to know any peace?"

As she asked herself this question Armine, with a very peaceful face, entered D'Antignac's chamber and advanced to the side of his couch with a note in her hand.

"It is from Miss Bertram," she said, answering his look of interrogation. "She sends me some books which she promised, and makes such solicitous inquiry for you that I thought you should see what she has written."

D'Antignac took the note and read with a smile the dozen or so lines traced in Sibyl's characteristically bold handwriting, then he handed it back. "Make my grateful acknowledgments," he said, "and tell her how little I am exhausted by the society of my friends. And when you have written, come back," he added, as Armine turned away.

She returned in a few minutes, and, sitting down in her accustomed seat by the couch, went on speaking of Miss Bertram.

"I am so much interested in her," she said, "that, if you will pardon me for making a suggestion to you—who always know without suggestion what is best for people—I wish you would explain to her something of those problems of life which once troubled me, and which you made so clear. She is very clever, but she seems to be drifting on a sea of opinions, without rudder or guide."

"My dear Armine," said D'Antignac, "I think that you are perhaps a better guide for her than I am. For one thing, she knows that you speak with the advantage of practical knowledge—that you have seen face to face all that has fascinated her from afar."

"But what weight can my knowledge or opinion have?" cried the girl quickly. "O M. d'Antignac! how can you say such things? Do I know anything save what you taught me? And if, by that means, I hold some truths, have I your power of sending them home to the heart? Ah! no; you humble me when you talk so! But I think Miss Bertram is worthy of your attention."

"Every immortal soul is worthy of our attention," he said; "but if mental gifts constitute any peculiar claim—which I do not grant—Miss Bertram certainly possesses it. She interests me also very much. She is exceedingly brilliant, and more sympathetic than brilliant people often are. The basis of her character is very noble; and where there is so much sincerity and so much earnestness the attainment of truth is only a question of time. Do you not know that haste often defeats its own end? Let us do what we can and be content to imitate the patience of God. This soul will come to him at last. Have no fear."

"I have none—when you speak so," she answered. "But it is sad to see a mind groping in darkness when one knows where light is shining."

"If it is groping toward the light we need only lead it

gently and pray much," he said. "The end is certain. But now, my Armine, it is of yourself I wish to speak—of *your* life, *your* future."

She looked at him with something startled and a little apprehensive in her eyes.

"What can you have to say of my life?" she asked. "Is there any reason why we should think of it?"

"There is a very strong reason," he answered. "You are called upon to make an important decision, one which will influence your whole life—"

She interrupted him quickly. "If it is of anything connected with—Marigny, that you are speaking," she said, "let me tell you that it is useless. Everything has been settled. I am to be troubled no more about that."

He could not refrain from smiling.

"I might play upon words and tell you that what I am speaking of is certainly connected with Marigny, though not with that to which you allude," he answered; "but it is a matter too important for trifling. My child, have you ever thought of—marriage?"

Still larger and more startled grew the dark eyes. She did not answer for a moment; then she breathed, rather than said, one word, "Never."

"Never!" repeated D'Antignac, somewhat surprised. The word would not have meant much from most girls' lips; but from Armine's he knew that it meant a great deal, for she never spoke carelessly or at random. "And yet," he said, "you must know that it is the state on which the vast majority of the human race enter."

"Yes," she replied, "but it has nothing to do with me. Why should you speak to *me* of it, M. d'Antignac?"

"Because one who is deeply attached to you and fully worthy of you—one who seems to have been brought by the providence of God into your life—asks permission to offer you the devotion of his heart and life."

He paused, but she did not speak. No soft flush of color rose to her face, nor did any light of expectant happiness come into her eyes. The last still kept their grave, startled look, and for the rest she sat as pale and still as a statue. After a moment D'Antignac extended his hand and laid it gently on hers.

"Shall I tell you the name of this man?" he asked.

"It cannot be!" she answered, with something like a gasp. "It is impossible that it can be—"

"The Vicomte de Marigny? Yes, it is he."

She looked at him for a moment longer, as if unable to believe, then suddenly sank on her knees and buried her face on his couch.

D'Antignac did not break the silence which followed. He did not understand her, but if this emotion was the expression of gratitude or happiness he felt a pang of keen pity to think of the blow which was in store for her, and which he knew would fall with such crushing force. He waited, therefore, in a state of painful suspense for some sign which should tell him what she was feeling and what it would be best for him to say. For, well as he knew the girl, and accurately as he had foretold her course of action in other cases, he was absolutely at a loss to conceive what her impulse would be now.

It seemed a long time to him before she lifted her face; but in reality the clock had not marked more than the passage of a minute when she raised her head and looked at him with a strange, bright look which absolutely startled him. For did it not mean happiness, and must he not dash that happiness with pain? "O my poor Armine!" was his inward ejaculation before she spoke. But when she spoke how soft and even and proud her voice was!

"I can hardly believe what you have told me, but since you tell me it must be true," she said. "But how can I tell you what it has made me feel? Yet I think you will understand; you will know that it is not of myself that I have thought, but of *him*. That he should offer his heart and his life to me—that is incomprehensible save on the ground of his own nobleness. And this nobleness—is it not something for which to be grateful to God to have known such a man, and something also of which to be proud that he has found in me—me, so poor and unworthy—anything to attract his regard? It is an honor which I shall never forget—never while I live, M. d'Antignac. But I do not think of that as I think of what it is, in him, to put aside all question of worldly advantage, and be willing to give his name and rank to the daughter of one who, to him and to the world, was only an obscure Socialist, with not even a right to the name he bore!"

"Then," said D'Antignac, divided between pleasure and pain, "am I to understand that you will accept him?"

"Accept him!" she repeated. "No. Can you think that I would do him such an injury as that?"

"An injury, Armine, when he loves you!"

"Does he?" she said softly, as if lingering a little on the thought. "I must believe that he does—else he never would have asked *this*—but that is no reason why I should do him so great an injury as to think, even for one moment, of marrying him."

"But how would you be doing him an injury?" asked D'Antignac, anxious to learn what was in her mind.

She looked at him in surprise. "Can you ask?" she said. "Do you not see? Whatever he does must, from his rank and position, be done in the face of the world; and what would the world say of such a marriage? It would bring scorn and disapproval upon him; it would lessen, perhaps, his influence among those whom he desires to lead; it would burden him with one who did not belong to his order and who was strange to his life. O M. d'Antignac! you must see that such a thing is impossible, and that only one who too little considered himself would ever have thought of it."

"I can answer for M. de Marigny," said D'Antignac, "that in this matter he has considered himself very much. He has thought of the happiness of his own life, which he believes that such a marriage would secure, and not at all of the opinion of the world, which is not worth a thought."

"It is for one in his position," said Armine. "His life's work is in the world; and, in order that he may do it well, men must respect as much as they admire him. He must do nothing to lessen his own power to serve a great cause, nothing which can give his enemies an opportunity to accuse him of inconsistency or folly. You know this, M. d'Antignac, and you know the world; you know what would be said of him if he married one whose political surroundings have been such as mine."

D'Antignac did not deny this, but he replied: "There would be no need for any one to know who you were. You belong now to the house of Marigny."

"Even if that were possible, which it is not," she replied, "what would you think of me if I could forget my past and deny my father? And what would my father think, M. d'Antignac? Could I take such a step without asking that question? And you know what the answer would be. Can I forget that I disregard his commands whenever I speak to M. de Marigny?"

"Have I not told you," said D'Antignac, "that such commands have no binding force upon you?"

"By the letter of the law, perhaps not," she answered; "but feeling takes no account of law."

"But it should!" said he, "else it may fall into wild extravagance. Your father was, unfortunately, filled with an unreasoning hatred of M. de Marigny, and you only perpetuate that hatred by observing his commands."

"His commands have nothing to do with my decision in this matter," she said. "If he had never spoken of M. de Marigny I should still feel that I could never do him the injury of suffering him to unite his life with mine."

She spoke calmly, but so positively that D'Antignac felt sure she would not be moved from this position—unless, indeed, De Marigny could exert an influence which even her resolution would not be able to resist. That he might exert such an influence D'Antignac began to believe possible; and, this being so, was it not necessary that she should hear of her father's last charge? He said to himself that it was necessary, and he was nerving himself to the effort of telling her when she spoke again:

"Yet this reason, though sufficient in itself, is not the only reason why I must decline the honor which M. de Marigny offers me. I might be tempted—oh! yes, it is possible that I might be tempted, despite my better judgment and the memory of my father, if I had not already devoted this poor life of mine to another purpose."

"To another purpose!" repeated D'Antignac, somewhat startled. "What do you mean?"

"Can you not tell?" she said. She was still kneeling by him, and, as she clasped her hands with the old familiar gesture that always indicated her deepest and most earnest feeling, there was a light on her face that made her look like a saint at prayer. "I told you once that I have in me something of my father's spirit—that my heart is with the poor and the suffering, and that, like him, I wish to cast my lot with them and to count nothing too much to do if I may bind up a few wounds or wipe away a few tears, if I may even in the least degree lessen the misery and the despair that is in the world. For I am not like those who have never thought of these things, whose lives have been cradled in softness and in ignorance of the wretchedness that lies all around us. The sound of it has always been in my ears, the sight always before my eyes, and I could not, if I would, forget it. My father—mistakenly but most devotedly—spent his life in laboring to relieve this wretchedness, and I desire to do the same."

"How?" asked D'Antignac, though he felt sure what the answer would be.

She looked up at the crucifix with an exquisite smile. "'If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow me.' That is what I would do, M. d'Antignac."

Their eyes met in a gaze in which soul was laid open to soul, and words were unnecessary. Never, perhaps, was sympathy more full, understanding more complete, between two human beings than between these two at this moment. All that one glance asked the other answered, until at length D'Antignac said:

"It may be God's will. But you must decide nothing hastily. To whom have you spoken of your desire?"

"To no one," she answered. "Do you think that I would speak to any one before I spoke to you?"

"And how long have you thought of this?"

"How can I say? The desire was with me long before it took positive form. Perhaps the first time that it took such form was when you said to me—have you forgotten?—that I might be intended to make reparation for my father's war against religion, to atone by prayers for blasphemies, and by good works for evil deeds. The suggestion was like a ray of light—an inspiration from heaven. It was what I had longed for—to aid, to labor, to atone—and thus the way was made clear to me. It has been growing clearer ever since. Yesterday some words in Notre Dame seemed spoken to *me*. If the evil of the age is only a perversion of its true impulse, then what my father so passionately desired—to serve humanity and to lessen its ills—is within my reach. I may work for his end, I may in some sort fulfil his purpose and atone for his errors. And more even than that"—her eyes filled with radiance as she lifted them again to the crucifix—"while I strive to relieve the misery of humanity I shall touch, relieve, reach *Him*. Who could have dreamed of it, if he had not said it? Surely, if the world would only think of it, we should have again the ages of faith, when the noblest and the greatest felt themselves honored to serve Christ in his poor! And to do that—to spend one's life doing that—O M. d'Antignac! is it not better than the sweetest cup of happiness which the world can offer to one's lips?"

If there was exaltation in her look as she asked the question, it was not the exaltation of a visionary, but of one who

had counted the cost and knew the meaning of that of which she spoke, and to whose lips that cup of human happiness had been held in sparkling brightness only a little while before. For a moment D'Antignac could not speak. Then he extended his hand and laid it on her head with the solemnity of a benediction.

"It is God's will," he said. "May he bless and sustain thee, sister of my heart!"

CHAPTER XLII.

D'ANTIGNAC had not long to wait before M. de Marigny came to hear Armine's decision. If, as he had said of himself, he was not an ardent lover, he was at least sufficiently impatient to desire to know his fate without delay, and in the mingling of fear and hope which occupied his mind in the interval, to the exclusion of other subjects, he learned more than he had known before of the deep hold which this feeling had laid upon him. Never, as he had said to D'Antignac, had he been so stirred, attracted, charmed, by any nature as by this which had so unconsciously revealed itself to him. But more even than the charm was that impression of strength united to infinite gentleness with which Armine had so strongly impressed Egerton, together with an idealism and a keen spiritual perception which made a type of character as unusual as it was elevated. The vicomte said to himself that if she once laid her hand in his, the world, with its accustomed shallow judgment, might think that *he* had given all, but that in truth he would receive as much as he gave—if not, indeed, far more.

But would she ever put her hand in his to aid him in the battle to which his life was pledged, and to be his companion toward eternity? He had little hope of it—so little that his heart grew heavy as he went to hear the result of his suit. The man who had hated him in life would even in death defeat his desire—of that he felt almost sure. Yet when he remembered how Armine had yielded to his influence and acknowledged the force of his arguments when it was a question of friendly intercourse, his spirit mounted again with an impulse of hope. For he felt within himself the power to overcome her scruples, if she would only listen to him. But would she do that?

Asking this question, he mounted the steps to D'An-

tignac's door. But when he entered the room nothing in his appearance indicated anxiety. He greeted his friend with his usual composure and talked for several minutes of the affairs of the day before there was any allusion to Armine. Then it was D'Antignac who opened the subject.

"I have fulfilled your wishes, Gaston," he said after a pause, "and I am sorry—for your sake—to tell you that Armine declines your offer."

The vicomte grew a little paler. This was no surprise to him, but even more pain than he had anticipated. He did not speak for a moment. Then he said in a low tone:

"You say that you are sorry for *my* sake. Do you mean that you do not think it would be for her happiness to accept my offer?"

"No," D'Antignac answered. "I believe that, as far as human happiness goes, it would be for her happiness in the highest degree. And"—his voice changed a little—"I think that she believes so, too."

"And yet—?" said the vicomte. Unconsciously he closed one hand with nervous force, as he said to himself that if *that* were true the dead Socialist should not from his grave hold them apart.

"And yet she refuses even to consider your offer?" said D'Antignac. "Yes, for two reasons. In the first place, because she believes that she would do you an injury by accepting it. Nay, hear me out! And, in the second place, because she has chosen something better than the happiness of life."

In the tumult of his own feeling it was natural that M. de Marigny should not have understood the meaning of the last words. He looked at his friend with a flash of resolution in his eyes. "Let me see her," he said. "These are no reasons at all."

"I think you will find them strong ones," said D'Antignac. "The first, though you may not recognize its force, is very strong to *her*. The second must be strong even to you."

"The second—what does it mean?" said the vicomte. "That she will sacrifice the happiness of life to her father's command?"

"She has not heard of her father's command," answered D'Antignac calmly. "I found that there was no need to pain her uselessly by telling her of it. Her resolution is taken without regard to that; and you need not feel that the obstacle

which stands between you is hate. On the contrary, it is love."

"Love!" repeated M. de Marigny.

"Yes, love," said D'Antignac. The word came from his lips with a force of penetrating sweetness, and as he looked at the other there was infinite affection in his tranquil glance. "Love which is strong enough to renounce the happiness and the ease of life in order to serve Christ in his poor, to bind up the wounds of humanity and strive to lessen its ills. That is the love which stands between you. And this being so, I know you well enough to be sure that you will say, '*Fiat voluntas Dei.*'"

There was a moment's pause, then M. de Marigny said slowly: "You mean that she is going to enter the religious life?"

"Yes, I mean that," D'Antignac replied. "And much as I desire, much as I would do, to secure your happiness, I do not think that either you or I would dare to bid her pause on the path where God calls."

"Not if it is indeed God who calls," said the vicomte after another pause. "But people mistake sometimes, and it seems to me that her position just now is one which would make such a mistake possible. She has hardly emerged from the shadow of a deep grief, and she has a belief that some insuperable obstacle—her own scruples or her father's commands—stands between her life and mine."

D'Antignac smiled slightly. "After all," he said, "you do not know Armine. It is no recoil from the world on account of grief or disappointment—which recoil can never constitute a true vocation—that is leading her, but a strong, inflamed desire to give her life and her effort to lessen in some degree the misery of the world; to help the sick and the suffering, to atone by prayers and good works for those blasphemies and evil deeds of which she knows so much, to work by the aid of the true light for that purpose toward which her father struggled in darkness, and to win at last the infinite reward of hearing, 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto me.' As far as I am able to judge, God's purpose with regard to her is clear. By a way which we could never have imagined he has prepared her soul and led it to himself. For this is no new resolution on her part. The desire has been with her long, growing ever clearer, and naturally of late taking more definite form. I will speak frankly and say that I think she would have

loved you had God not claimed her heart. But what he claims we must yield, even if it rends our own hearts to do so."

"Sometimes one has no alternative," said the vicomte, whose eyes were full of pain as they looked out of his pale face.

D'Antignac regarded him with an expression of exquisite sympathy, yet with the calm assurance of one who knows what the end will be.

"You have an alternative," he said quietly. "The sacrifice need not be passive on your part. You spoke a few minutes ago of seeing Armine. If you insist upon seeing her it is possible that you might induce her to change her resolution—for human nature is weak, and happiness allures us all—or at least you would make the struggle hard to her. For she said that she might be tempted to forget her own scruples and her father's commands, and to accept what you offer, but for the voice of God bidding her rise above the common joys of life to taste the divine joy of sacrifice. You may draw her back from the higher to the lower path, or you may bear a willing part in the sacrifice. That is for you to decide."

The vicomte rose to his feet. "You will think poorly of me," he said, "that I hesitate, and yet I do—so weak is human nature! Give me a little time. Let me ask what is God's will. I will return to-morrow."

"I have no fear," said D'Antignac as he held out his hand. "Go, and God be with you."

And, indeed, his face, as he lay back on his pillows after M. de Marigny had left the room, was not that of one who had fear; it was rather radiant, as of one who anticipated certain triumph. "So *this* is what it meant!" he said to himself as he lifted his glance to the crucifix. "We, in our blindness and short-sightedness dreamed of human happiness for them, while God was preparing an opportunity of sacrifice. *Benedicti vos a Domino!*"

Meanwhile M. de Marigny, having left the house, was walking away from the river along the Rue du Bac. He had no definite purpose in view, but had turned his face in this direction merely as a matter of instinct, his apartment being in the Rue de Grenelle. He had no intention, however, of going there or anywhere else in especial; his impulse was simply to be alone and struggle with the temptation that assailed him—the temptation to bear down all opposition by the strength of his will and seize the happiness for which nature longed. And this temptation was stronger because the hap-

piness so desired seemed to be united with the highest aspirations of *his* nature. What he felt for Armine bore not even the faintest resemblance to vulgar passion. It was allied to his most exalted hopes and touched his most tender sympathies, so that to resign it seemed like resigning the better part of himself, or at least an influence capable of aiding that better part in all it might desire or undertake. And when we are called upon to resign not the lower but the higher, not the thing which we acknowledge to be bad but the thing which we know to be best, then indeed the struggle is hard, the resistance strong.

The man walking so quietly along the Rue du Bac was in the midst of this struggle when a familiar voice said: "*Bon jour, M. le Vicomte.*" And looking up he found Egerton before him.

"I have just left my card at your apartment," said the latter. "I regretted not finding you at home."

"I regret still more not having been at home," said the vicomte. "If you have no engagement, perhaps I may induce you to retrace your steps."

"I have no engagement at all," said Egerton; "but you are no idler like myself. It is possible that you may have."

"An engagement—no," said the vicomte. And then he paused. He had all the habitude of a man of the world, all the power of putting aside whatever he might be feeling in order to fulfil any social claim or duty that presented itself. But just now he felt as if the effort required would be difficult. His pause said this, and Egerton understood it at once.

"But you intended to do something else—which is equivalent to an engagement," he said. "I cannot think of interfering. I shall give myself the pleasure of calling another day. *Au revoir.*"

"Stop an instant," said the vicomte, laying a detaining hand on his arm. "You are right. Though I have no engagement, there is a reason why I will not insist on your accompanying me to my apartment. But I will ask you to accompany me somewhere else. Will you come?"

"Willingly," answered Egerton.

"Without asking where I shall take you?"

"Oh! I have perfect confidence, and am prepared to follow wherever you lead."

The vicomte smiled a little. "I wish you were indeed prepared to follow where I am about to lead," he said. "Perhaps in time. *Allons!*"

They walked on along the Rue du Bac, and presently M. de Marigny paused before a large building, mounted a high flight of steps, and opened a door. Egerton followed, and found himself, somewhat to his surprise, in a church which bore a strong resemblance to a convent chapel. There was a screen dividing it, but within the space set apart by that screen were no feminine forms. Those that were to be seen were masculine—young men in the dress of seminarians. There were only two or three, and they were kneeling quietly, absorbed in prayer. On the outside of the screen M. de Marigny also knelt, and Egerton, after meditating some minutes on the scene—which was not without its strangeness in contrast to the tumultuous life of the street a few feet away—began to look around him, and then perceived at one side some newly-erected tombs or tablets below which wreaths of immortelles were placed. He moved toward them and read the inscriptions, which were brief and simple, only telling that at a recent date those to whom these memorials were erected had suffered martyrdom in China.

As the young man stood looking at the words which said so little yet told so much, it flashed upon him where he was—within the walls of the Mission Étrangères, the nursery of confessors and martyrs! He had heard of it, but vaguely—as one hears of something afar off—yet here it was in the very heart of the hurrying, pulsating life of Paris! One had but to turn aside from the busy, brilliant streets, to open a door, in order to stand on holy ground—by the graves of martyrs and in the presence of those who would to-morrow go forth to follow in their footsteps, to take up their labors and perhaps meet their reward. Egerton looked from the marble tablets, with their brief story, to the men in the flower of youth kneeling before him—men who had forsworn all the sweetness of life to prepare for an existence of infinite hardship and toil, with the probable crown of a cruel death—and asked himself if it could be that they were of the same race and nature as himself. He thought of his own idle, luxurious life, of the lack of faith, lack of purpose, lack of good which characterized it; and, as it rose before him, shame filled him like a passion. Yet not shame alone. The desire to reach those loftier heights of feeling and action where other men trod, the longing for spiritual light, overpowered him. Faith—faith to believe all things, to hope all things, to dare all things—was what he asked. And while he stood outside the great

household of God, wishing, longing for this faith, here was the record of what men of his own generation had endured for it. Was their sacrifice extremest folly or sublimest wisdom? He answered the question when he knelt and said almost unconsciously: "Holy martyrs of Christ, pray for me!"

How long Egerton knelt he did not know, but he never forgot what he felt during those moments. With almost the vividness of a vision he saw the cruel torments amid which these men had laid down their lives, following in the footsteps of their Lord, preaching his Gospel and bearing his cross even to the very height of Calvary. And then, in contrast, he felt all the infinite peace of this spot where they had gained the strength for that supreme sacrifice. *Here* the offering had been made, *here* life and all its sweetness was renounced, *here* every tie that binds man to earth had been severed. Surely it was a spot in which to form great and generous resolutions! Surely those who could not, even from afar off, follow such heroes might at least catch some faint spark of their spirit here, and grow ashamed of their own selfish lives and careless hearts.

The young man was still kneeling when M. de Marigny, after a considerable lapse of time, finally approached him. He rose then, but, before turning away, stooped to take one immortelle from the wreaths near him. After they left the church a minute or two elapsed before either spoke. Then Egerton said slowly:

"That is a wonderful place to make one think. I shall not soon forget it. After all, sacrifice is the supreme test of religion. 'If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me.' How entirely all modern religious systems ignore that! And yet without sacrifice there can be no religion in any vital sense."

"The religion which does not demand sacrifice is no religion at all," said M. de Marigny; "and when it is demanded—well, then one learns how much or how little one's faith is worth. It is, as you have said, the supreme test." He paused a moment, then added: "Do you know anything of the writings of Lacordaire?"

"Not much, but something," Egerton answered. "M. d'Antignac gave me a volume of his *Conferences* not long ago. I have found them magnificent."

"There are sentences in his writings which recur to me

strongly now and then," said M. de Marigny. "In the church yonder I thought of this: 'When you desire to know what a person is worth, sound his heart, and if it does not give forth the sound of sacrifice, though it be clothed with the kingly purple, genius, birth, or fortune, turn your head aside and pass on; it is no longer a soul with whom you ought to have any intercourse.'"

"I fear," said Egerton, "that if that test were applied few of us would prove worthy of intercourse."

"One should apply such tests to one's self before one applies them to others," said the vicomte simply. "It was to myself that I applied it. 'When you desire to know what a person is worth, sound his heart, and if it does not give forth the sound of sacrifice—' It is a hard test, but one that never fails. And if one is humbled by the result—well, that too is a good thing. One learns the measure of one's own weakness. And yonder is a good place in which to gain strength."

"It seems to me a good place in which to gain all that is essential for life or death; and certainly the power of sacrifice is essential for both," said Egerton. "But one smiles to hear you speak of the measure of *your* weakness, M. le Vicomte. What would you think if you could know the measure of the weakness of others?"

"It is enough to know the measure of one's own," said the vicomte. "I have learned it to-day. Yet there is this comfort, that a sacrifice which cost little would be worth little; whereas to resign the desire of one's heart—that is a great privilege. The struggle was sharp," he went on, speaking as if to himself, "but it is over. *Fiat voluntas Dei.*"

Egerton made no comment—plainly the words were not intended for him—and they walked on silently for some time. Then at the Rue de Grenelle he paused.

"It is astonishing," he said, "how many things that look like mere accidents—the result of veriest trifles—have seemed since I have been in Paris to form part of a harmonious whole, and to lead me by devious ways in one direction. For instance, my meeting you this afternoon has resulted in an impression that I do not think will pass away. And so I have to thank you before bidding you adieu."

"Do not go," said the vicomte. "Come with me to my apartment. Nay, do not hesitate! The mental struggle is over which made me disinclined for your society an hour ago. In the place where we have been one could not, for very shame,

refuse any sacrifice that God demanded. But pain remains, even after the struggle is over. So come and let me have the best medicine for pain in the world—that of trying to do another a little good. One who has advanced as far as you have should halt there no longer.”

“Then tell me what to do,” said Egerton quietly.

CHAPTER XLIII.

WHEN Mrs. Bertram went out of the room, leaving her daughter and Mr. Talford alone together, it is not to be supposed that she was insensible to the possibility of that declaration which Sibyl on her part feared. But it did not strike Mrs. Bertram as a thing to be feared, but rather as a thing to be desired, on one ground, if not on another. Though she had no reason to believe that her daughter would accept Mr. Talford, neither had she any reason to believe that she would reject him, and under the circumstances it was surely well that the matter should be brought to an issue. And there was at least no precipitation in it. Any other woman than Sibyl would have been disappointed that the offer had not been made long before this; and although it might readily be Sibyl's own fault that it had not been made, her mother was nevertheless anxious that she should not be deprived of the triumph of having Mr. Talford's difficult taste and large fortune laid at her feet. “If she would only accept him!” Mrs. Bertram sighed, with some faint hope that she might do so—for that consideration of manner toward him which struck Egerton so forcibly had not escaped her observation—but, if this were not to be, it was none the less desirable that he should not resign his suit without having come to a decisive point; for Mrs. Bertram knew her world, and knew what would be said in that case, since it was well understood that Mr. Talford had more than once roused hopes in fair bosoms which he finally walked away without gratifying. If retribution overtook him there would be heartfelt pleasure in many quarters; but unless there was certainty of this retribution there would unquestionably also be strong incredulity.

Aware of this, Mrs. Bertram, like a wise woman of the world, said to herself that it would be no fault of hers if Mr. Talford did not leave the house either an accepted or a rejected suitor. Nothing would have induced her to efface herself in an obvious manner; but she was not sorry for the sum-

mons which called her from the *salon*, and, having despatched the business which demanded her attention—the simple payment of a bill—she saw no necessity for returning to the room, where a steady murmur of conversation indicated that her daughter and Mr. Talford were agreeably, and she hoped profitably, occupied. She therefore retired to her chamber and awaited the issue with mingled hope and fear, meditating the while upon the superior excellence of the French marriage system, which leaves so little to the vagaries of individual choice.

Mr. Talford's departure was presently audible, but there was no sound or sign of Sibyl. Mrs. Bertram waited for what seemed to her a considerable length of time, and then entered the *salon*, where she found that young lady seated in the chair where she had left her, gazing absently out of the window at the sun-gilded tree-tops of the Parc Monceaux. She did not turn her head as her mother entered, and after a moment's pause Mrs. Bertram walked up and laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Are you dreaming?" she said. "I hope the subject of the dream is pleasant."

Sibyl looked around at her with a smile.

"Poor mamma!" she said. "The dream is not what you would like it to be. It is sad, is it not, to have a daughter who is so impracticable? I wish for your sake that I had been made differently. Though I cannot say," she added, as if to herself, "that I wish I had been made able to marry Mr. Talford."

"Then you have refused him!" said Mrs. Bertram in a low tone. She thought that she had not indulged in much hope, but she learned by her disappointment that it was greater than she imagined.

"Did you think it possible that I would accept him?" Sibyl answered. "If so, I am sorry for your disappointment; but there has never been a moment in which it was possible to me."

"And yet—" said Mrs. Bertram, then paused.

"And yet—what?" asked her daughter. "You cannot mean to imply that I gave you any reason to believe it possible?"

"No," was the reply. "I cannot say that you gave *me* any reason."

"If not you, who then? Certainly not *him*."

"Perhaps not—certainly not—that you would accept him,"

said Mrs. Bertram. "But you have not indicated in any manner that you disliked him."

"Why should I, when I do not dislike him? Is there no medium between disliking a man and being willing to marry him? It seems to me that it is not a passive but an active feeling one requires for the last."

"That is not what I mean—you know that is not what I mean," said Mrs. Bertram. "Of course it is an active feeling that one requires for such an important step, and I am not as worldly as you think—I should not wish you to marry without love. But you have seemed to *like* Mr. Talford—for you."

"And you thought such liking might be a substitute for love—for me?" said Sibyl. "Certainly no one is accurately known even by those who should know one best."

"But you cannot deny," said Mrs. Bertram, a little obstinately, "that you have treated him better than you treat other people."

"If I have it was because I was too indifferent to him to treat him otherwise. One does not quarrel with an absolute stranger—and Mr. Talford was an absolute stranger to all save the surface of my life. And then—I suppose you will hardly understand—but I was interested in him a little, as a study. I wanted to test the value of his philosophy of life."

Mrs. Bertram ejaculated, "Good heavens!" under her breath.

"And so," Sibyl went on, her gaze returning again meditatively to the tree-tops, "I may unintentionally have misled him a little. But I do not think it could have been very much. I have been considering the matter ever since he went away, and I am sorry if in the least degree I have brought on him a disappointment—which is, however, no deeper than his vanity."

"You cannot possibly tell that," said Mrs. Bertram. "Why should he have asked you to marry him, if he were not attached to you?"

"There are different forms of attachment," said Sibyl quietly. "Some are flattering; others again are—not. I do not think I could make you comprehend what I felt when Mr. Talford offered me what *he* called love."

"I am not very stupid, yet I doubt if you could," said Mrs. Bertram dryly. "Your ideas are altogether too exalted for my comprehension."

Sibyl gave a short sigh. "It is a pity when people do not understand each other," she said, "but at least I do not obtrude my ideas, save in affairs that concern myself alone."

"But how can you think that the affair of your settlement in life concerns yourself alone?" said Mrs. Bertram pathetically. "What can concern me more? I would give anything to see you happily and brilliantly married, for the end will be that I shall die and you will be left alone—an old maid with a very moderate fortune."

"What an appalling picture!" said Sibyl, with a smile. "But I hope you do not mean to die soon; and as for the old-maidhood—I could not only support that, but I should consider it happiness compared to marrying a man who was uncongenial to me. It must be a struggle to marry even a man whom one loves and admires—for one can never be free again. But to think of marrying one whose character one despises, whose aims in life one scorns—'that way madness lies.' Nothing could induce me to do it—*nothing!*"

She rose as she spoke, looking so beautiful and stately in her energy that Mrs. Bertram involuntarily clasped her hands.

"O Sibyl!" she exclaimed, "you will throw away all your attractions—and you have so many!—if you do not look at things more—more practically."

Sibyl laughed. "That was Mr. Talford's word," she said. "He, too, advised me to look at things 'practically.' But unfortunately I am incapable of following such advice. It is a pity for you, mamma. I wish you had a different daughter—one who would make a brilliant marriage and do you credit."

"If you imagine that I am thinking of myself you make a great mistake," said Mrs. Bertram, a little wounded—for her worldliness was of a mild order. "I am thinking of *you*, of your life, and of the position you ought to occupy in the world."

"I am sure that you think of me," said her daughter gently. "I did not mean to imply otherwise."

And, indeed, she said to herself, what was the good of farther words? There are characters so essentially different that, like parallel lines, they may run side by side during the intercourse of a lifetime without ever approaching near enough for comprehension. It had not been a mere form of speech when Sibyl said that for her mother's sake she wished she had been made differently—"for it must be hard when an only

child disappoints one!" she had often thought, feeling the defective sympathy between them more on her mother's account than her own. But wishes on such a subject being quite vain, the defective sympathy remained, though veiled by mutual affection, and only coming to the surface on a few occasions.

The present was such an occasion; but when her first disappointment was over Mrs. Bertram said to herself that, after all, things might have been worse. It was quite possible—so she acknowledged—that Mr. Talford might not have made a perfect husband for one so highly strung as Sibyl, and at any rate it was something to have rejected that difficult and fastidious personage. No one would *now* be able to say that he had trifled with Miss Bertram, for Mrs. Bertram determined that in a quiet way the truth should be known.

The opportunity for disclosure was not difficult to find; in fact, it soon presented itself in the person of Miss Dorrance, who a day or two later made her appearance, and, finding Sibyl out, opened her purpose to Mrs. Bertram.

"I should like to know what you and Sibyl propose to do with yourselves this summer," she said. "Don't you think it would be pleasant if we could go to the same place? Mamma and I have been talking of it, and I thought I would inquire what your plans are."

"I cannot say that we have formed any plans," Mrs. Bertram answered. "When Paris becomes too warm we generally go to the sea-shore or to Switzerland; but there is nothing to take us to any special place, and I should be delighted if our plans could be made to agree with yours."

"To a certain extent ours are fixed by the doctors," said Laura. "They say that mamma must go to the German baths. Do you think you would care to go there?"

Mrs. Bertram replied that for herself she liked the German baths very much—"though Sibyl does not fancy them," she added. "But there is time enough in which to discuss the matter. You are certainly not thinking of leaving Paris yet?"

"I do not want to leave it," Laura answered, "but Cousin Duke is trying to persuade mamma to go. He seems suddenly to have conceived a great desire to get away; and he is bound to see after us, you know. Papa has laid that on him as a duty he cannot escape. He *must* take us and settle us wherever we decide to go; so he wants us to go at once, which is most disagreeable of him!"

"Paris will certainly be very pleasant for another month," said Mrs. Bertram, "and I should think that your mother would like to remain as long as possible under the immediate care of the doctors."

"So she would," said Laura, "and she should simply decline to go; but she has an idea that she ought not to detain and inconvenience Cousin Duke—though Heaven knows he has nothing to do, and no reason why he should be in one place more than another! It is abominably selfish of him; but he always was selfish!" Then the young lady paused and turned her sharp eyes on Mrs. Bertram with a very penetrating look. "His desire to leave Paris is so suddenly developed that I think Sibyl must have something to do with it," she said.

Mrs. Bertram smiled slightly—a lady-like and gently regretful smile. "I am sorry," she said, "and Sibyl, I know, will be very sorry, if any disappointment which she was obliged to inflict upon Mr. Talford has even remotely inconvenienced your mother and yourself."

"So she *has* rejected him!" exclaimed Miss Dorrance. "Well, I suspected as much, and I am sure I hope it will do him good! I told him she would not marry him, but he was so sure that no woman would refuse him. Now he sees who was right! Of course it was foolish of Sibyl—you must acknowledge that, Mrs. Bertram, for he is very rich and a good fellow on the whole—but still it is not a bad thing for him to realize that there is one woman who would not marry him!"

It is needless to say that nothing would have induced Mrs. Bertram to acknowledge that she had herself thought it foolish of Sibyl.

"Your cousin was indeed very much deceived if he imagined that Sibyl would marry him," she said, with quiet dignity. "A man has, of course, a right to try his chance, but he has no right to count on a favorable answer when he has only been treated with ordinary courtesy."

"He is very much spoiled," observed Laura. "That goes without saying. But Sibyl did treat him with a good deal of consideration for a time. We all observed that."

"She was interested in his philosophy of life," said Mrs. Bertram, standing to her colors.

Miss Dorrance lifted her eyebrows. "That sounds like Sibyl," she said. "I wonder if Cousin Duke has a philosophy of life! I think I must ask him. It would be very instructive."

And he would be pleased to know that he was regarded as a study."

"I hope you will not think of implying anything unkind—" Mrs. Bertram began, when the young lady interrupted:

"Oh! dear, no. I shall not mention the subject to him unless he speaks of it. One cannot take liberties with him beyond a certain point. And this disappointment has really struck deep: he is not like himself at all. It is a pity, for it may interfere with our summer plans. It would not be pleasant, under the circumstances, for him and Sibyl to be thrown into contact, unless you think there is a chance that she might change her mind. Women do sometimes, you know."

Mrs. Bertram shook her head. "Sibyl will not change hers," she said gravely.

"It is a pity!" repeated Miss Dorrance. "She might do a great deal worse. And there is really no telling what she *will* do in the end! Clever people are so—peculiar sometimes, and Sibyl is capable of going any lengths for an enthusiasm."

"I do not think that you understand Sibyl," said Mrs. Bertram, with an air that expressed more than the words. "She is enthusiastic, but not at all likely to be carried away in a foolish manner. And, although she might certainly do worse than accept Mr. Talford, she might also do better. But you have not yet mentioned to what one of the German baths your mother thinks of going."

In this way Sibyl's champion gallantly refused to confess the misgivings which she felt, and Miss Dorrance was effectually silenced. But not deceived. "Mrs. Bertram will not own that she is uneasy about what Sibyl may do," that young lady averred afterwards, "but I am sure she must feel that it is perfectly possible she may either marry a Communist or become a nun any day!"

Meanwhile when Sibyl heard of Laura's visit and its object she begged her mother not to think of joining the Dorrance party anywhere or under any circumstances. "It would be impossible for me to entertain such an idea," she said; "for Mr. Talford must be with them and look after them, in a degree at least, and the position would be very disagreeable to both of us. Indeed, on my part it would look as if I desired him to repeat his offer."

"Yes, it would not do," said Mrs. Bertram, with a slight sigh. "It might be pleasant to spend the summer with the Dorrances, but—"

"Do you think it might be pleasant?" asked Sibyl a little dryly. "I confess that I do not. I am glad of an excuse to avoid it."

"O my dear! I am not so *exigente* as you are," said Mrs. Bertram, unable to resist sending this small arrow. "Mrs. Dorrance and I have been friends for a long time, and I like her society very well, but of course it is not to be thought of under the circumstances."

"I am sorry if I am at all to blame for the circumstances," said Sibyl.

"How could you be to blame?" replied her mother. "I did not mean that. If men fall in love no one could expect *you* to prevent it. But we must be thinking of our plans for the summer," the speaker went on quickly, anxious to change the subject. "I always like to know where I am going well in advance."

"Why should we go anywhere?" said Sibyl half-absently. "For once I should like to stay here."

Mrs. Bertram looked at her in surprise. "Here?" she said. "Stay in Paris all summer?"

"Well, not in Paris, perhaps, but in some place near Paris. How would you like Fontainebleau, for instance? I have always felt that I should be glad to spend a summer wandering through that forest."

"I think that I should prefer some more lively amusement," said Mrs. Bertram. "And so, I fancy, would you before long. Why have you taken an idea to stay near Paris? You usually speak of longing for the mountains or the sea when summer comes."

"Yes," said Sibyl; "but there are some things better than even the mountains or the sea—the companionship and the influence of a noble soul, for example. And if one might lose that for ever by going away—I mean if one should find it gone for ever when one returned—nothing that one gained could compensate."

"I suppose you are speaking of M. d'Antignac," said Mrs. Bertram. "Is he likely—to die?"

"He is likely to die at any time," was the reply. "When one thinks of his suffering it is impossible not to feel that it *must* end soon. I was there to-day, but I could not see him—it is one of his bad days. I saw Mlle. d'Antignac for a few minutes only, and she spoke of him with tears. I believe that she thinks the end is drawing near—not immediately, perhaps, but certainly."

"It is very sad," said Mrs. Bertram; "but since his recovery is impossible—and his suffering so great—one should be resigned to his release."

"It seems so, no doubt, to those who do not know him," said Sibyl, with the slight bitterness that is excited by such easy consolations. "But the world could better spare a thousand men who walk these streets to-day in health and strength."

"That may be; but if he suffers so much, existence can be only a pain to him."

"It is natural to think so, but I am sure that to *him* it is a blessing, because he can still do so much for others. And I, who have come so late into his life—I cannot consent to lose one day of what I shall always remember as the greatest blessing of my life."

Mrs. Bertram looked at her curiously for a minute; then she said, "He seems to have a great influence over you."

"Has he?" said Sibyl. "I do not know. I only know that he is able to supply every need of my nature—or, at least, to point out how they may be supplied. I have heard of a physician for the soul. He is one."

"But why should your soul need a physician?" said Mrs. Bertram, who had never felt the need of one for her own soul, and who thought that the words had a suspicious sound. "O Sibyl! I am afraid that the end of all this will be something very foolish and visionary!"

Sibyl smiled a little.

"Dear mamma," she said, "your fears would be set at rest if you could know what an absolute antidote to visionary folly M. d'Antignac's influence is. He leads one into a region where it can have no place—a region of truth as exact as logic and as clear as light. And if he shows one visions, it is only after he has taken care to set one's feet firmly upon a rock."

CHAPTER XLIV.

It was indeed a terrible ordeal of suffering through which D'Antignac was passing, and those around him thought more than once that the end was at hand. But his strong vitality still resisted the approach of dissolution; and after days of agony he came slowly back to a knowledge of the things of life, wan, exhausted, shattered from the onslaught of pain, which like a sullen foe retreated slowly, in preparation for some

fiercer attack which the worn forces of life could no longer resist.

During these days no one shared more constantly the vigil by his bedside than the Vicomte de Marigny, and in this way he was thrown into frequent contact with Armine. It was a contact which both avoided at first, but in the sharp tension of anxiety as D'Antignac's danger increased they forgot all save this anxiety which they owned in common, and when the worst was over it was as familiar friends that they congratulated each other.

"And now," said De Marigny as they talked softly in the *salon*, while deep quiet reigned in the chamber adjoining, where Hélène kept watch by him who lay wrapped in the bliss of respite from agony, "you should also think of resting. So much watching and anxiety has told upon you."

"Has it?" she said. "But relief seems rest enough—and it is such great relief!"

"Yes," he said a little sadly, "to us; but to him it is only a fresh lease of suffering. One cannot forget that."

"No, one cannot forget it," said Armine, "but who can say what it enables him to merit—for others as well as for himself? I am sure there is comfort in that for him, and so there should be for us."

"You have learned something of his way of looking at things," said the vicomte, with a smile.

"Everything that I know of good I have learned from him," she answered simply.

There was a moment's silence. It was late afternoon, and through the open windows floods of long sunshine came, together with the subdued sound of the city's life—the beating, as it were, of its great heart. The soft air was full of refreshment, but it brought no touch of color to Armine's pale cheeks. Watching and anxiety had told upon her, as M. de Marigny said, but it had not lessened the charm of the sensitive, poetic face with its deep, beautiful eyes. Those eyes were gazing out of the window at the depths of blue sky when she spoke next, as if unconsciously uttering a thought aloud:

"But it will be harder than ever to leave him after this."

The vicomte started. "To leave him!" he repeated involuntarily. "Are you going—away?"

She, too, started a little; and now a faint tinge of color came into her cheeks. It was evident that she had spoken unconsciously.

"Oh! yes," she said, a little hurriedly. "I thought you knew. I go—soon—to join the Sisters of Charity."

The vicomte did not answer immediately. Indeed, it was plain that it cost him a strong effort when he said presently:

"I have heard that you thought of the religious life, but I did not know what order—"

"There could be no question with me," she said. "I want a place in the ranks of those whose lives are given to the service of the suffering and of the poor. And where should I find that save with the daughters of St. Vincent de Paul?"

She paused after the question, and M. de Marigny forced himself to say something about the merit of such a choice.

"I do not think that I can claim much merit," she answered quietly, "for it is less a deliberate choice between the higher things of God and the lower things of the world than a passion which impels me. I could not rest in ease and happiness. The misery of which the world is full, and which I know so well, would pursue me. I could not forget it. For others such forgetfulness may be possible. It would not be for me. The poor call me. My place is with them and my work is among them."

She looked at him, as she spoke, with eyes full of wistful entreaty. Her voice, though very low, seemed with every sentence to deepen in feeling. He could not resist the impression that she was pleading with him to understand her now, as he had understood her before. Again the thought of the churchyard of Marigny came to him, and of the letter which he had read on the terrace of the château—full of the same entreaty. It was impossible to withhold the expression of his comprehension and sympathy.

"I understand you," he said in a low tone. "The passion of which you speak is that with which God fills the souls which he destines for noble deeds. Before it all human passions must veil their heads. And you have this great happiness," he added in a tone that despite himself was sad, "that you offer to God a heart and a life that will be his supremely—a heart that has not been wearied by the world, a life that has not been soiled in its service. You have chosen 'the better part.' No one could even desire to take it from you."

Comprehension was not on his side alone. She understood the sadness under the self-forgetful words, and a longing filled her to say something—anything—to lessen the pain

of which she was instinctively conscious. She did not pause to think as she spoke hurriedly:

"Such words are like all that I have known of you. You have always understood; you have never made a mistake; you have been kind and generous from the first. Do you know what it is to be placed in a difficult position and to meet one who divines all that you feel without the need of speech, and who never fails in sympathy? That is what I have always found you. Do not think that I have not felt it—that I do not feel it in my heart." She paused for an instant, then went on in another tone—that tone, at once proud and pathetic, which he had heard from her once before—"I told you once that it mattered little what name one bore. Where I am going it matters nothing—for there alone the Socialists' dream of equality is realized, so I may for once acknowledge the tie of kindred blood, and say that in leaving the world I shall take with me no happier memory than that I leave such a noble kinsman fighting in a cause for which I can only pray."

Words failed him with which to answer her. She seemed already to speak from a height which no prayer of his could reach, had he desired to make any. But he had not forgotten the hour when he resigned his heart's desire to the will of God; and now that he was face to face with Armine, that he heard her words, saw her spirit, as it were, unveiled, he felt, as D'Antignac had felt before him, that her resolve was based on no impulsive fancy, but on the clear and positive words—heard now as of old by many a faithful soul—"Leave all and follow me."

"What can I say to you?" he asked presently in a low tone. "You know what is in my heart, but you have sealed my lips."

"Have we not understood each other almost without words from the first?" she answered gently, rising as she spoke and standing before him, a slender figure in the slanting sunset glow. "Believe me, all is better so; and you—in a little while you will feel it. For this is God's will—I am sure of it—and he makes no mistakes. See!" she clasped her hands with the old familiar gesture—"after what I have known could I turn my back upon humanity which suffers, and upon God who calls, to be merely happy? Ah! no. You must feel—say that you feel I could not!"

He, too, rose, answering with every faculty of his being to the sudden passion of that demand upon him.

"I feel it now," he said, "if I have not felt it before. All that I have offered is worthless compared to what you choose. How could a man dare to make himself the rival of God? I do not dare. Go, in God's name! Leave happiness to those who have no higher good."

"But is there not happiness in the higher good?" she said. "The world may not know it, but *you* know that there is. To work, to endure, to spend and be spent in God's service and the service of the poor, in lessening for a few the misery that drives them to despair—what is the happiness of ease and content and natural love to this? It is wonderful that God should have called *me* to this happiness; but since he has—oh! if hereafter you ever think of me, let it be to thank him for me!"

She turned and went away before he could utter a word; but, left alone, he said to himself that he should ever after remember her chiefly as she had stood before him then—her eyes full of infinite radiance, and her figure touched by a light that left the room with her.

As D'Antignac grew better one of the first visitors admitted to his presence was Egerton. The young man had been solicitous in his inquiries, but he had not seen D'Antignac until this occasion, when H  l  ne admitted him to the familiar chamber, warning him, however, not to remain long.

It was an unnecessary caution. For Egerton was so shocked when he saw the face that lay motionless on its pillows—as white and thin again as when he saw it last—that he would fain have escaped almost immediately, fearing to exhaust the little strength which the sick man still possessed, had not D'Antignac detained him.

"Nay, do not go," he said, when, after his inquiries were over, the young man made a movement to depart. "I have not seen you for what seems to me a long time—whether it be long or short in reality I do not know—and I have something to tell you."

"I only fear to tire you—or to suffer you to tire yourself," said Egerton, hesitating. "Mlle. D'Antignac warned me—"

"Never mind H  l  ne," said D'Antignac. "I don't allow her to play tyrant over me a moment longer than I am able to assert myself. *Restez!* I want to speak to you of Armine."

He made a slight motion with his hand—a hand as thin and

pale as the face—which Egerton obeyed by resuming his seat, wondering as he did so over the marvellous faculty of this man for forgetting himself in others. He had dismissed the subject of his own suffering—that absorbing subject to most invalids—in the fewest possible words. But he was ready to talk of Armine, to throw himself into the interests of another life. It was so wonderful to Egerton that he did not speak, and after a brief pause D'Antignac went on:

"Do you remember—but of course you remember—our conversation one day about the last charge which her father laid upon you? We decided then that she must be told of it, if the necessity arose. You will be glad to know that it has not arisen, and that it will never arise."

"I am glad—very glad—to know it," said Egerton, much surprised; "but pardon me if I ask how can you be sure that it will never arise?"

"Because," answered D'Antignac, "we agreed that she need not be told unless there was a probability of her marrying M. de Marigny. There is no such probability."

"But there may be," said Egerton a little obstinately.

"No," said D'Antignac, with a smile in his dark, serene eyes, "there will never be. For those who enter the religious life there is no more question of marriage than there is for the dead; and Armine will soon enter that life."

"What! she will become a nun!" cried Egerton, startled beyond control.

"Not exactly a nun—that is, not a cloistered nun," answered D'Antignac calmly. "She will become a Sister of Charity, to follow in the footsteps of our Lord, to nurse his sick and tend his poor. If you will think a moment you will perceive that it is the only fitting end for Armine."

Egerton did not answer; he sat still and thought for more than a moment. And he said to himself at length that it was indeed the only fitting end for the girl whose youth had been passed amid the terrible sounds of the social revolution, who had heard the divine counsels of perfection perverted into war-cries of communism and robbery, who had seen face to face the misery that leads to revolt and the spiritual ignorance that leads to crime. What could she, with her passionate soul and her clear mind, do but join the great army of those whose mission it is to carry light and comfort into the dark places of earth? Dimly the young man felt as she had said—that happiness, mere commonplace, earthly happiness, was not for her.

It was beneath the exalted soul that could not do less for God than her own father had done for humanity. By a flash of inspiration Egerton saw and understood it all. Even before the light of faith had shone upon him he, too, had felt, as noble souls must feel, the divine necessity of sacrifice; and though he could not yet in his ignorance fathom that mystery (which must be ever a mystery to the carnal mind) of prayer and intercession for a guilty world which the cloister hides, he had often bowed before those heroines of divine charity who carry through hospital wards and scenes of infinite wretchedness the habit of St. Vincent de Paul. It was truly a fitting end for the Socialist's daughter that she should wear this habit of the devoted servants of the poor, and that she, whose father had denied God with his dying lips, should go through life holding the crucifix before dying eyes.

"I understand now why it was that I could never feel as if any worldly destiny within my power to imagine would suit her," said the young man at length abruptly. "As I told you once, she always seemed above the possibility of love from *me*. That was not remarkable; but even when I thought of her in connection with M. de Marigny, I might feel that it would be an ideal marriage, yet I could not fancy her merely a happy wife like other women. She seemed made for some higher destiny—to be a heroine, a genius, or perhaps a saint."

"She may be all three yet," said D'Antignac, smiling. "Saints are the geniuses of the supernatural order; and, indeed, in the natural order I have always thought that there was a touch of genius in Armine. But then, you know, I have always been an enthusiast about her."

"Every one who knows her must be," said Egerton.

"Oh! no," D'Antignac answered. "To the commonplace all things are commonplace—and all persons also. To appreciate even a genius or a saint one must have a little, at least, of that fine quality called sympathy. I do not flatter you, *mon ami*, when I say that you possess more than a little of it."

"It proves a misleading quality sometimes," said Egerton.

"Without doubt. What is there of good which cannot be turned to evil? But surely by this time you have learned—or, if you have not, you will learn—that a man must have some certain guide to distinguish between the good and the evil of this life, where evil so often wears the guise of good."

"I have learned it," answered Egerton. "I have learned it by the bewilderment with which I have listened to the dif-

ferent voices that tried to solve the riddle of life and only added to its mystery and its sadness. When one is young and rich, and the sun shines, this is a delightful world—provided one does not think, and that one cares for nothing beyond the surface of existence. But if one does think, and if one begins to question, then there is no longer peace until one has followed principles to their ultimate end, and reached either the dreariness of absolute scepticism or the satisfaction of absolute faith."

"And you have reached—?" said D'Antignac eagerly.

The door opened at that instant, and Egerton rose to his feet, glancing around quickly. Then he smiled.

"I thought it was Mlle. D'Antignac coming to eject me," he said, "but it is Mlle. Armine. She never appeared at a better moment. Come, mademoiselle, and hear the answer to a question which M. d'Antignac has just asked. I think it will interest you a little."

Armine advanced, and, laying her hand in that which he held out, said, with the exquisite smile and voice that charmed him first: "Whatever concerns you, M. Egerton, must interest me."

Egerton did not release her hand at once, but, holding it, stood looking from herself to D'Antignac for an instant. Then he lifted his glance to the crucifix that hung over D'Antignac's couch.

"After God," he said reverently, "I owe it to you two that I am able to say to-day, '*Credo in unam, sanctam, Catholicam et Apostolicam Ecclesiam.*'"

CHAPTER XLV.

"If you should meet Miss Bertram, will you tell her how much better Raoul is, and that he will be glad to see her whenever she can come?"

It was Mlle. d'Antignac who said this to Egerton as he was taking leave, and the words lingered in his memory when he found himself again in the streets. Indeed, as he crossed the Pont du Carrousel he said to himself that they were in fact a message which it would be well to deliver at once, since he had nothing else to do, and—he remembered it suddenly—this was the Bertrams' reception-day. A minute later he had stopped a passing *fiacre* and was driving toward the Parc Monceaux.

It was a very familiar scene on which he entered when the door of the Bertram *salon* opened—a fragrance of flowers filling the air, sunshine streaming on the pretty, fantastic appointments of the room, while half a dozen voices were talking, and the clatter of teaspoons indicated the usual accompaniment of these informal social occasions. Egerton knew most of those present, and after he had exchanged several greetings he found himself approaching Miss Bertram. She was standing near one of the windows of the *salon*, talking to a man who turned as she said, “How do you do, Mr. Egerton?” and revealed, to Egerton’s great surprise, the face of Winter.

“Ah! Egerton, is it you?” he said cheerfully. “You are in Paris yet, then?”

“So it appears,” answered Egerton. “Why should you imagine that I was not?”

“I called to see you a few weeks ago, and the *concierge* told me you had left. I thought it very natural, considering your experiences just at that time.”

“Yes, it would have been quite natural,” said Egerton a little dryly. Then he turned to Miss Bertram. “I think,” he said, “you have heard me speak of my Red Republican friend of the Quartier Latin, who gave me my first impulse toward Socialism. Behold him.”

“Mr. Winter!” said Sibyl. “You surprise me. I should never have fancied him a Red Republican.”

“Now that Egerton has betrayed me, it is too late to deny my opinions,” said Winter; “but I may be permitted to ask why you would not have fancied that I held them.”

She smiled a little. “You have a perfect right to ask,” she said, “since we have only talked together for ten minutes, and it is therefore rather strange that I should have formed any opinion concerning you. But, in point of fact, do we not conceive an idea of a person as soon as we hear of him? If your aunt”—she glanced across the room at an elderly lady talking to Mrs. Bertram—“had said, ‘I want to bring my nephew, who is a student of the Quartier Latin, to see you,’ I should immediately have imagined Red-Republicanism of the most furious type. But what she did say was, ‘I want to bring my nephew, who is a great Oriental scholar, to see you,’ and how could I imagine anything so incongruous as Orientalism and Red-Republicanism?”

Egerton laughed at the expression of Winter’s face. “The oldest and the newest ideas of the world brought into contact

—the Avesta, the Veda, and the *Philosophie Positive*! Confess, Winter, that it *is* incongruous!” he said.

But Winter was far from confessing anything of the kind. “I am very sorry,” he said, “that Miss Bertram should have been led to believe that I am ‘a great Oriental scholar,’ who am merely a student of Oriental languages and literature; but I fail to perceive that there is the faintest incongruity in studying the oldest myths of the world and believing in its latest creed of progress. On the contrary, the one naturally leads to the other, as childhood leads to manhood.”

“And so the *Philosophie Positive* marks the manhood of the human race!” said Miss Bertram. “But may it not—I merely throw out the suggestion—mark its second childhood? With the idea of gradual development there must be connected also the idea of decay. And since we do not know the length of life allotted to the race, how are we to tell that it is not the downward instead of the upward path?”

“Humanity is immortal,” said the Positivist very positively. “There is no downward path for it. The race will constantly advance in knowledge and the application of knowledge until—”

“Yes, until—what?” asked the young lady as he paused.

“Until we attain social and political perfection,” said he boldly.

“And then?” said Miss Bertram. “Excuse me, but this is very interesting, and I always like to press things to their ultimate conclusion. After we have attained social and political perfection—what then?”

“Why, then we—or if not we, for I fear there is no hope that *we* shall ever see it, but those who *do* see it—will enjoy it,” said Winter, smiling.

“And become immortal?” asked she.

It began to occur to him that this young lady with her grave, attentive face was covertly laughing at him.

“You are surely aware,” he said, “that we do not believe in immortality for the individual, but only for the race.”

“Yes,” she said, “I am aware of it, but I really cannot understand why you should deny what the world has believed for ages with regard to the one, and assert what it has denied with regard to the other, unless you have had some new light upon the matter.”

“We have had the light of positive science,” said Winter.

"And has positive science discovered anything about immortality? I thought that it was a subject which lay entirely outside of its domain—that it refused to advance one step beyond the grave."

"True; but there is no grave for humanity. That is the point."

"It does not seem to me a point very well made," said she, smiling. "If you will not recognize any power outside of nature, I am unable to see where you find ground for believing that anything is exempt from the law of decay and death which governs everything that we know. Whatever had a beginning must have an end—is it not so? Or if you believe in the immortality of the race, for which you have no warrant in nature, why not believe in the immortality of the individual soul, and a heaven that will not be only for some distant mortal generations, but for the immortal hosts of all ages?"

As she asked the question, with her eyes full of the brilliant light that always came into them when anything roused her interest, Egerton thought that he had never seen her look more beautiful, and the same fact probably made Winter hesitate before saying:

"Ah! that old dream of heaven—what a fascination it exerts over the human mind!"

"Yes," said Egerton. "One may be permitted to doubt whether your ideal of human progress will ever exert a like fascination."

"Perhaps not," said Winter. "Yet that ideal at least is tangible."

"So far from it—but you and I have been over this ground before without appreciable result, so we will not inflict a fresh discussion on Miss Bertram."

"I assure you that it interests me very much," said Miss Bertram. "There is nothing I like more—you ought to know that, Mr. Egerton."

"I know how delighted you always look at the D'Antignacs'," said Egerton, smiling.

"Yes," said she, smiling in turn, "and that reminds me: why have you never taken Mr. Winter to the D'Antignacs'? It would be just the place for him."

"I really never thought of it," said Egerton, "but I fear Winter would not agree with you. He would not think it the place for him."

"I cannot give him credit for such bad taste," said she. "I cannot imagine any one not enjoying M. d'Antignac and the atmosphere which he creates. I wonder"—she paused a moment, and her face as well as her tone changed—"if we shall ever enjoy that atmosphere again! Do you know, have you heard, how he is?"

"I am just from there," Egerton answered, "and I found him very much better—so much better that I talked to him for half an hour—and when I was leaving Mlle. d'Antignac asked me to tell you of his improvement, and to add that she knew he would be glad to see you whenever you cared to come."

"How good of her!" said Sibyl. "And how good of you to bring me the message at once. It makes me happy to think of seeing M. d'Antignac again!"

"You will be terribly shocked when you see him," said Egerton. "He looks more like a spirit than a man."

"He always looked like that."

"Oh! he looks as much so again now. He has evidently passed through the most horrible suffering possible; but he puts it aside, like a thing of no importance, and begins to talk about the affairs of the person visiting him. It was a way he always had, you know, and of course one's egotism falls easily into the trap. I am always disgusted, when I go away, to remember how much I have talked about myself."

Miss Bertram laughed. "I know very well what you mean," she said, "but on such occasions I am not disgusted with myself, because I am sure that M. d'Antignac's interest has not been pretended."

"This M. d'Antignac must be an accomplished man of the world," said Winter. "To set people to talking of themselves and make them believe that they are thereby immensely interesting him—that is the perfection of worldly tact."

"Yes," said Miss Bertram; "but worldly tact is only the imitation of something better—of real self-forgetfulness—and that M. d'Antignac possesses. To put others before one's self—that is what spiritual perfection and good-breeding both demand. But one is to the other what gold is to paper currency. Somebody long ago said that."

"Well, one must admit that paper currency is more convenient," said Winter, "but one likes now and then to touch gold. I think I should like to see this M. d'Antignac. Who is he?"

Egerton gave his history in few words; then he said: "You see he is a person with whom you have little in sympathy, but if you really care to see him I am sure that he would be willing to receive you."

Winter hesitated. A papal soldier, a passionate Catholic—certainly he had little in sympathy with the man who was these things. He was about to say, "No, thanks; on the whole I do not care to know him," when Sibyl spoke:

"M. d'Antignac is a man who has something in sympathy with every one, and his friends—or at least his acquaintances—seem to belong to all shades of opinion. I do not think you will find yourself at all out of place in his *salon*, Mr. Winter; and if you take my advice you will certainly allow Mr. Egerton to present you next Sunday. We always go there on Sunday, if he is able to receive."

The "we" conquered. The student of Oriental literature, who had been dragged against his will out of his Bohemian retirement in the Quartier Latin, felt that he should like to meet again those brilliant eyes and hear that charming voice.

"I shall follow your advice with pleasure, mademoiselle," he said, "if Egerton will present me."

"I shall be delighted," said Egerton, "to have an opportunity to repay your kind offices. I have not forgotten that I owe my introduction to Duchesne to you."

"Ah, poor Duchesne!" said Winter. "He was your enthusiasm for a time. But I never expected you to be a serious convert to Socialism, and I was therefore surprised that you should have been going to Brussels with him when he was killed."

"It was curiosity, idleness—I hardly know what, but certainly not conviction—which was taking me," said Egerton. "It was a narrow escape from death, and yet—I am and always shall be deeply indebted to you for having enabled me to know Duchesne."

Miss Bertram glanced at him a little keenly as Winter said:

"He was a wonderful man and a great loss to his cause. We could have better spared many who are more famous. If he could not convert you, no one ever will."

"I am quite sure of that," said Egerton. "No one ever will—to Socialism. Though I am ready to acknowledge that Socialism has an ideal which is noble and generous compared to the selfish materialism of the society against which it re-

volts. It is, in fact, the reaction against this materialism; and it cannot be long before the two forces come to open war. There is a terrible judgment approaching for the world which has made Mammon its god and prosperity its supreme excellence."

Winter regarded the speaker curiously.

"What a singular person you are!" he said. "You are neither fish nor flesh. You acknowledge that materialism is crushing society, and yet you will not join the forces that fight against it."

"How do you know that?" asked Egerton tranquilly. "There are other forces besides Socialism which fight against it. It was not Socialism which said, 'Woe unto ye rich,' and 'Blessed are ye poor.'"

"Oh!" said the Positivist, with contempt, "the great Founder of Christianity may indeed have said that, but you know as well as I that the so-called Christian churches have long since abandoned such doctrines and made a complete and lasting alliance with Mammon."

"I grant you that the human so-called churches, founded by men whose first act was to seize the heritage of the poor and to obliterate from men's minds the counsels of perfection, have done so," Egerton answered; "but we may put them aside. They have indeed upheld the worship of material prosperity which now curses the world; but their day is over. Every man who thinks recognizes now their want of logical basis, their absolute incapacity to teach or lead human society. But the church—the one, majestic church of all ages—which taught them all that they know, repeats for ever the words that I have uttered, and for ever proves her right to utter them by being continually slandered, persecuted, and led to Calvary like her Lord."

Winter stared for a moment. Then he said: "I told you how it would be! I am not surprised! When people have reactionary sympathies one never knows where they will end."

"Or, rather, one knows very well where they will end, if they have any logic," said Egerton. "Unfortunately a great number of worthy and excellent people have none at all. And we are all more or less prone to the amusement of setting up a man of straw in order to knock him down. We do not care to investigate doctrines which we do not wish to believe true. The history of the perpetuation of error lies in that."

"Some things one scorns too much to think them worth examination," said the other.

Egerton shook his head. "Ah, *mon cher*," he said, "there is fear as well as scorn, else you would not forget all scholarly and philosophical rules. You would not look at the most stupendous fact of human history solely by the light of partisan testimony. But"—he turned to Miss Bertram—"I am afraid I must apologize. I forgot that I was not at M. d'Antignac's. In a *salon* like this one should not fall into such grave discussions."

"No," said Miss Bertram, with a slight air of disdain, whether for him or the *salon* it was difficult to tell; "we should be talking about the Opéra Comique, the fashions, and the races. To do us justice, we were discharging our duty in that line—were we not, Mr. Winter?—when you came up."

"Then there only remains for me to take myself away," said Egerton, with a smile.

"Wait a moment," said Winter. "My aunt, I see, is rising, and after I have put her in her carriage we will walk down the Boulevard together."

A few minutes later they were in the open air, strolling along the Boulevard Malesherbes toward the Madeleine. Both were silent for some time, and it was presently Winter who spoke:

"What a beautiful woman Miss Bertram is!—and as clever as she is beautiful! I am tempted to wish that my aunt had come to Paris a little earlier; yet I know that things are best as they are. I should only have singed my wings—to no purpose."

"You cannot tell that," said Egerton somewhat absently.

The other glanced at him quickly and, as it seemed, a little indignantly.

"Don't tempt me to knock you down!" he said. "As if I could not see how she changed color when you came up! Well, there are some things that not even Socialism can set straight. We can never give all men an equal chance with a woman."

"Nor with many other things," said Egerton, smiling, yet effectually startled. "But, my dear Winter, if you imagine that I have any chance with Miss Bertram you are greatly mistaken. Sometimes I think that she dislikes, and I am al-

ways sure that she scorns, me—though, honestly, I do not know why.”

“Because you are so stupid, I presume,” said Winter drily. “You must be uncommonly stupid if you believe that. If ever I saw a woman’s eyes speak—but why should I enlighten you? You don’t deserve such luck!”

Egerton could not restrain a laugh.

“I never knew before that imagination was your strong point,” he said. “The idea of Miss Bertram—who is a veritable Lady Disdain—regarding me with favor is absolutely ludicrous, though I don’t mind confessing that I have never at any time needed more than a grain of encouragement to precipitate me into a grand passion for her. But the grain of encouragement has never come.”

“Nor ever will,” said Winter, with a scorn equal to that of Miss Bertram. “Encouragement! Bah! does one look for a queen to smile like a grisette? The man who wins Miss Bertram must win her without encouragement—he must win her in spite of herself! And I only wish”—with an honest sigh—“that I were the man!”

CHAPTER XLVI.

ON Sunday evening, for the first time in many days, his friends gathered again around the couch on which D’Antignac lay—pale, worn, but with tranquil content in his eyes and smile. Not a single face was missing of those most familiar to him, and he looked at them as one who did not know how long such sight may be granted; for he was as well aware as the doctors that the sharp suffering which had withdrawn for a time might return at any hour, and that the exhausted forces of life must then go down before it. Something of this thought was in the smile with which he received congratulations on his improvement and put aside all discussion of his condition. “I am comparatively free from pain to-day,” he said. “That is enough; we will not think of yesterday or to-morrow.”

Egerton was one of the latest arrivals, having gone to the Quartier Latin for Winter, who had forgotten his promise and was only animated to keep it by the thought of meeting Miss Bertram. Yet even he was touched indescribably by the scene upon which he entered—by the pale, serene, almost radiant face of the man who lay helpless on his couch, and by

the joyous cheerfulness of those around him. D'Antignac held out his hand with a smile. "Miss Bertram has been telling me about you," he said to the young man. "I wish you had come earlier. Egerton should have brought you before."

"I have seen very little of Winter of late," said Egerton. "His life and mine have somehow drifted into different channels."

"There was no drifting about it," said Winter. "They have always been in different channels. Life for me means work, and for you pleasure. There is a wide difference."

"A difference altogether in your favor," said D'Antignac. "There are few people more to be pitied than the man who lives only for his own pleasure; though I do not mean to imply that Egerton belongs to that class."

"I *have* belonged to it," said Egerton simply, "and I can testify that you are right. The man is indeed to be pitied who has no better end."

Winter shrugged his shoulders. "Here we are at once at our old point of disagreement," he said. "Men who are elevated by fortune above the need to work will always live for their own pleasure."

"You see the conclusion," said Egerton, looking at D'Antignac with a smile. "Therefore—so runs the syllogism—no one should be allowed to accumulate enough of fortune's goods to elevate them above the need to work."

"The conclusion is as false in logic as in fact," said D'Antignac. "The man who is not restrained by a sense of duty from living for his own pleasure as a millionaire would not be restrained as a laborer, except by the narrowness of his means. But even in narrow means there is scope for selfishness—and the selfishness of the workman who leaves his family without food while he spends his wages on drink is more keenly felt than the selfishness of the fine gentleman who lives for his own amusement."

"And therefore," said Winter, "living for his own amusement is a luxury which fortune secures to the fine gentleman and of which a considerable part of the world desire to deprive him."

"In order that they may have greater freedom in living for *their* amusement?" said D'Antignac, with a smile.

"On the contrary, that no one shall possess such freedom; that every one shall be forced to do his share of the work of the world."

"That sounds very well," said D'Antignac quietly, "but have you a recipe for banishing selfishness from the world that you think it possible to prevent men—most men—from seeking their own interest and pleasure? Yet, notwithstanding this tendency of human nature, there are not many drones in the human hive, and democrats like yourself should remember that for every great achievement of the world—for statecraft, for heroism, for art, for science, for all that gives permanence and splendor to civilization—you are indebted to men who were elevated by fortune above the need of servile toil."

"Even Oriental research might come to an end if its students were reduced to the necessity of digging for their bread," said Egerton.

"As it happens," said Winter, "it is exactly for my bread that I *am* digging among Oriental roots."

"Secondarily, perhaps, but not primarily," said Egerton, "else I am sure you might find a quicker way to make it. No, no; in the ideal republic of Socialism there will be no leisure for refined pursuits or high intellectual processes. The aristocracy of intellect and attainment must follow the aristocracy of birth. What! do you think that we are going to tolerate scholars and geniuses any more than dukes and millionaires? Let us be consistent and have equality in all things. Nature, it is true, disdains to recognize it; but then we may improve upon nature."

"I can't flatter you, Egerton, that sarcasm is your *forte*," said Winter. "If there is anything for which the Revolution is remarkable it is for the manner in which it fosters intellectual life."

It was at this moment that Sibyl Bertram, unable longer to restrain her impatience, abruptly ended another conversation in which she was engaged, and drew near. The smile which the last assertion had drawn to D'Antignac's lip at once attracted her attention.

"I am sorry I was not a moment sooner," she said. "M. d'Antignac looks so much amused that something very entertaining must have been said."

"Something very entertaining was certainly said," answered D'Antignac, "though I acquit Mr. Winter of any intention to be amusing. He has just informed us that the Revolution is chiefly remarkable for fostering intellectual life."

"And can any one deny it?" demanded Winter with as-

tonishment. "Is not every fetter removed from speculative thought? Is not the educational question the burning question of the day in every country in Europe?"

The smile had left D'Antignac's lip now, and a light came into his eye that meant, as Sibyl knew, the rousing of his deepest feeling. But his voice was as calm and gentle as ever when he answered:

"Yes, it is true. Every fetter is certainly removed from speculative thought, and the right to deny God's truth has ended in the right to blaspheme and denounce him. It is also very true that the educational question is the burning question of the day in every country of Europe. But why? Is it because the Revolution is filled with zeal for learning? Every dispassionate man must be aware that, on the contrary, it is simply because the schools are the propaganda of revolutionary and infidel ideas. The battle is not for education, but for *godless* education. Else why are the teaching orders expelled from France, and, with few exceptions, every religious house of instruction closed?"

"You will pardon me," said Winter, "but we do not believe that education, in the proper and enlightened sense of the word, can be given in a religious house."

"And therefore," said D'Antignac, with unmoved calmness, "you forbid those who differ with you to send their children where they please. I will not pause to point out the admirable consistency of liberal ideas—for we have long since learned that 'freedom of thought' means freedom to oppress all who do not agree with you—but I will venture to ask when the church became incapable of guiding the civilization which it created? For you, a student, a scholar, you who have your dwelling in the old *Pays Latin*, cannot be ignorant of the fact that 'there is not a man who talks against the church in Europe to-day who does not owe it to the church that he is able to talk at all.'"

"I am aware," said Winter, "that we owe a great debt to the ecclesiastics of the middle ages, but—"

"But you think it well to repay that debt by exiling their descendants and converting houses of learning into barracks for soldiers. *Eh bien*, do you ever, in passing through the famous quarter where you live, try to recall the idea of the great university which once existed there, with its swarming thousands of students, its forty-two colleges, its abbeys, cloisters, and churches, enriched by an art that had been taught by faith?

Then does it occur to you to remember that every noble foundation was laid in centuries that an age of shallow learning ventures to call 'dark,' by ecclesiastics to whom the modern world pays its gratitude in reviling? and how and by what it was destroyed?"

Winter colored slightly. "The Revolution, of course, did not spare it," he said, and then paused.

"No," said D'Antignac, "the Revolution did not spare it. Through those splendid halls, through the great libraries and stately cloisters, swept the storm in the name of freedom of thought, and those who now excuse this storm find it convenient to forget that it not only demolished churches and violated tombs, but that it also suppressed all houses of learning. Under its fierce blast the great University of Paris perished, and was replaced by a bureaucratic system of public instruction which has filled even the chairs of the Sorbonne with doctors of infidelity, and degraded such few of the ancient colleges as remain to mere lyceums, where the youth of France are trained to despise all that their fathers honored, and to extol and imitate the deeds of men who, while calling themselves apostles of reason, strove to extinguish the light of human intelligence as well as that of divine faith."

There was a moment's silence as the clear, vibrating tones ceased. For once Winter could not reply. He knew the stubborn facts of history, and, confronted with them, had no word of excuse to make. Presently D'Antignac looked at him with a kindly smile.

"When next you enter the Sorbonne," he said, "think a little of this, and try to realize that the church which did such great things for human learning when she was queen of all nations and no man denied her power is not likely to desire to doom men to ignorance now. On the contrary, she desires to rescue them from the ignorance and the false learning—that is, learning resting on false premises—which are destroying society and menacing civilization."

"He is certainly a remarkable man," said Winter to Miss Bertram, when he had discreetly withdrawn from the immediate neighborhood of the couch. "It is not so much what he says—one has heard that before—but the way in which he says it, and the look with which he accompanies it. I understand now the change that has come over Egerton. A month or two ago he was as near a Socialist—by Jove! I beg your pardon, but that cannot be Mlle. Duchesne yonder?"

"Yes," said Sibyl, smiling at the amazement of his tone, "that is Mlle. Duchesne. You know her, then?"

"I met her once at her father's. But it is impossible! It cannot be the person I mean. How would she come here?"

"Very simply. The D'Antignacs are old friends of hers. And she is certainly, I think, the person you mean—that is, she is the daughter of the Socialist Duchesne."

"But *his* daughter—*here*!"

"It does seem remarkable, no doubt, especially when you knew him. But I assure you that she is his daughter; and here is Mr. Egerton to support me in the assertion."

"Yes," said Egerton, who drew near at the moment, "it is certainly Mlle. Duchesne. Should you like to renew your acquaintance with her?"

"Renew! I have no idea that she remembers me," said Winter. "But I wish you would tell me how her father's daughter comes to be here."

"There is not much to tell," said Egerton. "The D'Antignacs, strange as it may seem, were her oldest friends in Paris, and she had no relatives. Suppose you come and speak to her? I assure you she does not shrink from her father's friends."

Thus encouraged, Winter consented to be taken up to Armine, and, having presented him, Egerton returned to Miss Bertram.

"I have returned good for evil in the most admirable manner," he said, with a smile. "It was to Winter that I owed my introduction to Duchesne, and now I have repaid the debt by presenting him to Armine. If any one can counteract her father's work she can."

"Did she counteract it in you?" asked Miss Bertram.

"Yes," he answered. "I think I owe more to her than even to M. d'Antignac, since but for her I do not believe I should ever have been roused to sufficient interest to listen to him."

There was a moment's pause. Then, without looking at him, Miss Bertram said:

"Do you know—have you heard—what her intentions are?"

"To enter the religious life?" he answered. "Yes, I heard that some time ago. Did not you?"

"No," she answered, lifting her eyes now and regarding

him with a scrutiny so keen that it puzzled him. "I only heard of her resolution to-day. It surprised me very much."

"Is it possible?" said Egerton. "It did not surprise me at all. Of course there was a little shock at first, but in five minutes I agreed with M. d'Antignac that it is the only fit end for her. It is what I always dimly felt that she was intended for. I might have fallen in love with her but for that," he ended, with a smile.

"Are you sure that you did not do so?" said Miss Bertram—involuntarily it seemed.

"I am quite sure," the young man answered, though he looked a little surprised. "My feeling for her was not at all of that kind. She seemed to inspire something altogether different—as if she had been a saint already. I always thought her like Guercino's St. Margaret," he added, smiling again.

"Saint or no saint, I think if I had been a man I must have fallen in love with her," said Miss Bertram; "so you see I only gave you credit for good taste in suspecting you of having done so."

"You are very kind," Egerton answered, "but"—he paused, then added in a low tone, "*you* should have known better."

Miss Bertram lifted her eyebrows. Her glance said as plainly as words, "What had I to do with it?" But notwithstanding this, there must have been some faint sign of that encouragement concerning the lack of which Egerton had complained, for he went on quickly:

"I have long said to myself that there only needed a word, a glance, to make me passionately in love with you; but I am not sure now that the word or glance has been needed. You have always seemed to regard me with so much scorn that hope has been out of the question; yet I think it is possible to love without hope."

Sibyl did not answer—indeed, there did not seem to be anything in this speech which required an answer—but after an instant she rose and moved away, not, however, toward any of the various groups, but farther away from them, to one of the open windows which overlooked the river. This emboldened Egerton to follow her.

"I know," he went on, in the tone of one who pursues an argument, "that my life has been deserving of your scorn, and that your vague aspirations at which I used to smile were more than my contentment with lower things. Yet perhaps

I seemed more contented than I was, and if self-disgust may lead to better things—”

He was interrupted here. With her old impetuosity Sibyl turned to him.

“And what was *my* life that *I* should have ventured to scorn any one?” she said. “You do not understand—you never understood—it was because I thought you had the power to do something better that I was impatient. But I have grown a little wiser. I know now that one should not criticise unless one has a better way to point out. I had none.”

“But there is a better way,” said Egerton, “and, if you will, we may seek it together. This sounds presumptuous, perhaps”—as she stood still and did not answer—“and I have no right to expect you to believe in me. But we have both felt that life is meant for something better than mere living for one’s own interest or one’s own pleasure; and I think we both see that the nobler existence is within our reach. The question is, shall we enter upon it together or apart? That is for you to decide. But if—if there is the least hope for me, I am—willing to wait—to serve—”

“I have come to say good-evening, dear M. d’Antignac,” said Sibyl half an hour later.

D’Antignac looked up at her as she stood in her charming beauty by the side of his couch, extending her hand. He took it with a smile, and glanced from her to Egerton, who stood by. Did those kind, dark eyes read everything? It seemed so to the two who met them.

“We have a better salutation than that in French,” he said. “It is the most exquisite of all forms of greeting. For brief or long parting, for joy or sorrow, for life or death—what better can we say than adieu? It expresses all blessing and it places those whom we love where we would wish ever to leave them. So, my dear friends”—he held out his other hand to Egerton—“à Dieu!”

THE END.



